

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Section
1000 East Grand—Des Moines, Iowa 50319
DECISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
68-0157 (7-97) – 3091078 - EI**

**RONALD L KNIGHT
100 HYAK DR
SHENANDOAH IA 51601**

**FAREWAY STORES INC
2300 E 8TH
BOONE IA 50036**

**Appeal Number: 04A-UI-08805-S2T
OC: 07/18/04 R: 01
Claimant: Respondent (2)**

This Decision Shall Become Final, unless within fifteen (15) days from the date below, you or any interested party appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by submitting either a signed letter or a signed written Notice of Appeal, directly to the **Employment Appeal Board, 4th Floor—Lucas Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319**.

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday.

STATE CLEARLY

1. The name, address and social security number of the claimant.
2. A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
3. That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
4. The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in this appeal or you may obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds. It is important that you file your claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

(Administrative Law Judge)

(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct
Section 96.3-7 – Overpayment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Fareway Stores (employer) appealed a representative's August 5, 2004 decision (reference 01) that concluded Ronald Knight (claimant) was discharged and there was no evidence of willful or deliberate misconduct. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on September 8, 2004. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Mike Mazour, Director of Human Resources.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was hired on May 8, 1976, and at the end of his employment he was working as a full-time grocery manager. The claimant received a copy of the employer's harassment policy and signed for its receipt yearly. The last time he signed for receipt was in May 2004. The employer issued the claimant a written warning and one-week suspension on July 25, 2002, for harassing a female employee by making inappropriate comments.

On July 6, 2004, the employer discovered the claimant made inappropriate comments to a female subordinate. The claimant told the subordinate that he heard she was drunk and running naked through the streets the previous night. He implied that her forgetfulness was due to lack of sex. When he telephoned her at her home for business purposes he asked her what she was wearing. The claimant was repeating comments he heard on the television show, Seinfeld, and said the comments in jest. The subordinate was offended. The employer terminated the claimant on July 8, 2004, for harassment.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue is whether the claimant was discharged for misconduct. For the following reasons, the administrative law judge concludes he was.

Iowa Code Section 96.5-2-a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

2. Discharge for misconduct. If the department finds that the individual has been discharged for misconduct in connection with the individual's employment:

a. The individual shall be disqualified for benefits until the individual has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the individual's weekly benefit amount, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

871 IAC 24.32(1)a provides:

Discharge for misconduct.

(1) Definition.

a. "Misconduct" is defined as a deliberate act or omission by a worker which constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of such worker's contract of employment. Misconduct as the term is used in the disqualification provision as being limited to conduct evincing such willful or wanton disregard of an employer's interest as is found in deliberate violation or disregard of standards of behavior which the employer has the right to expect of employees, or in carelessness or negligence of such degree of recurrence as to manifest equal culpability, wrongful intent or evil design, or to show an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests or of the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. On the other hand mere inefficiency, unsatisfactory conduct, failure in good performance as the result of inability or incapacity, inadvertencies or ordinary negligence in isolated instances, or good faith

errors in judgment or discretion are not to be deemed misconduct within the meaning of the statute.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). "The use of profanity or offensive language in a confrontational, disrespectful, or name-calling context may be recognized as misconduct, even in the case of isolated incidents or situations in which the target of abusive name-calling is not present when the vulgar statements are initially made." Myers v. EAB, 462 N.W.2d 734 (Iowa App. 1990). An employer has a right to expect employees to conduct themselves in a certain manner. The claimant disregarded the employer's right by making disrespectful statements to a co-worker. The claimant's disregard of the employer's interests is misconduct. As such, he is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits.

Iowa Code Section 96.3-7 provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

If the department determines that an overpayment has been made, the charge for the overpayment against the employer's account shall be removed and the account shall be credited with an amount equal to the overpayment from the unemployment compensation trust fund and this credit shall include both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

The claimant has received benefits in the amount of \$1,681.00 since filing his claim herein. Pursuant to this decision, those benefits now constitute an overpayment, which must be repaid.

DECISION:

The representative's August 5, 2004 decision (reference 01) is reversed. The claimant is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits because he was discharged from work for misconduct. Benefits are withheld until he has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount provided he is otherwise eligible. The claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$1,681.00.

bas/kjf