

**IN THE IOWA ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

BRIAN J BENNETT
Claimant

TYSON FRESH MEATS INC
Employer

APPEAL 23A-UI-11062-PT-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**OC: 10/29/23
Claimant: Respondent (2)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quit
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Overpayment of Benefits
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 – Employer Participation in Fact-finding Interview

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed an appeal from the Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) November 21, 2023 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that allowed benefits based on a determination that claimant voluntarily quit employment on October 20, 2023, due to detrimental working conditions caused by the employer. After due notice, the undersigned administrative law judge held a telephone hearing on December 15, 2023. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated through Human Resources Partner Azra Kuduzovic. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative record.

ISSUES:

Whether the claimant voluntarily quit his employment with good cause attributable to the employer.

Whether claimant has been overpaid any unemployment insurance benefits, and if so, whether the repayment of those benefits to the agency can be waived?

Whether any charges to the employer's account can be waived?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed as a full-time brine room operator from September 14, 2020 until his employment with Tyson Fresh Meats Inc. ended on October 20, 2023. As a brine room operator, claimant was responsible for maintaining temperatures and performing quality control on marinades and brines, setting up machinery, and performing data entry. Claimant worked from 3:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. Monday through Friday.

On October 2, 2023, claimant met with two different supervisors and informed them that he intended to resign on October 20, 2023, because he had accepted a new job with a different employer. Claimant told his supervisors that he was staying until October 20, 2023, so that he could help train his replacement. The employer accepted claimant's resignation.

While claimant's primary motivation for resigning from his employment with Tyson Fresh Meats Inc. was to accept a new job with a different employer, claimant testified that his decision was also motivated, in part, by frustrations he had with his job duties and several supervisors. Specifically, claimant found his job duties to be fast-paced and at times stressful. Claimant also felt that some of the supervisors talked about employees in an unprofessional manner. Lastly, claimant recounted an incident where a supervisor instructed him to use the wrong brine on a product so that the product would be ready more quickly. Claimant reported the supervisor's instruction to upper management and a higher level manager addressed the situation with the supervisor.

Claimant resigned from his employment with Tyson Fresh Meats Inc. on October 20, 2023. There was continuing work available to claimant had he not quit the employment. While claimant had received an offer of employment from a different employer, the subsequent employer later revoked the offer. Claimant never performed services or received wages from the subsequent employer.

Claimant's administrative records reflects that claimant filed his original claim for benefits with an effective date of October 29, 2023. Since filing his initial claim, claimant has filed weekly claims and received benefits for five weeks between October 29 and December 16, 2023, for total benefits of \$2,910.00. The employer did not participate in the fact-finding interview.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes:

Iowa Code § 96.5(1) provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits, if the individual has left work voluntarily without good cause attributable to the individual's employer, if so found by the department.

A voluntary quitting means discontinuing the employment because the employee no longer desires to remain in the relationship of an employee with the employer and requires an intention to terminate the employment. *Wills v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 447 N.W. 2d 137, 138 (Iowa 1989). A voluntary leaving of employment requires an intention to terminate the employment relationship accompanied by an overt act carrying out that intention. *Local Lodge #1426 v. Wilson Trailer*, 289 N.W.2d 608, 612 (Iowa 1980); *Peck v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 492 N.W.2d 438 (Iowa Ct. App. 1992).

On October 2, 2023, claimant informed two different supervisors that he was giving his three-week notice. This establishes that the claimant intended to quit and his verbal resignation to the employer was his overt act carrying out that intention. As such, claimant voluntarily quit his employment.

The claimant has the burden of proving that the voluntary leaving was for good cause attributable to the employer, or that another exception to the rule exists. Iowa Code § 96.6(2). If the claimant fails to meet their burden, the separation from employment is disqualifying.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.25(3), (21), (22), and (37) provide:

Voluntary quit without good cause. In general, a voluntary quit means discontinuing the employment because the employee no longer desires to remain in the relationship of an

employee with the employer from whom the employee has separated. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.5. However, the claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving Iowa Code section 96.5, subsection (1), paragraphs "a" through "i," and subsection 10. The following reasons for a voluntary quit shall be presumed to be without good cause attributable to the employer:

(3) The claimant left to seek other employment but did not secure employment.

(21) The claimant left because of dissatisfaction with the work environment.

(22) The claimant left because of a personality conflict with the supervisor.

(37) The claimant will be considered to have left employment voluntarily when such claimant gave the employer notice of an intention to resign and the employer accepted such resignation. This rule shall also apply to the claimant who was employed by an educational institution who has declined or refused to accept a new contract or reasonable assurance of work for a successive academic term or year and the offer of work was within the purview of the individual's training and experience.

Claimant's primary motivation for quitting his employment with Tyson Fresh Meats Inc. was to start a new job with a different employer. However, the subsequent employer later revoked the offer of employment and claimant never performed work for the subsequent employer. Further, while claimant may have felt that his job duties were stressful and that several supervisors at times acted unprofessionally, the evidence does not demonstrate that these conditions amounted to an unsafe, unlawful, intolerable, or detrimental working environment. Taken together, while claimant's decision to quit his employment may have been for good personal reasons, it was not for a good cause reason attributable to the employer. As such, benefits must be denied.

The next issues to be determined are whether claimant has been overpaid benefits, whether the claimant must repay those benefits, and whether the employer's account will be charged. For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits.

a. 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.

b. (1)(a) 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 employer shall not be relieved of charges if benefits are paid because the employer or an agent of the employer failed to respond timely or adequately to the department's request for

information relating to the payment of benefits. This prohibition against relief of charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers.

(b) However, provided the benefits were not received as the result of fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual, benefits shall not be recovered from an individual if the employer did not participate in the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to section 96.6, subsection 2, and an overpayment occurred because of a subsequent reversal on appeal regarding the issue of the individual's separation from employment.

(2) An accounting firm, agent, unemployment insurance accounting firm, or other entity that represents an employer in unemployment claim matters and demonstrates a continuous pattern of failing to participate in the initial determinations to award benefits, as determined and defined by rule by the department, shall be denied permission by the department to represent any employers in unemployment insurance matters. This subparagraph does not apply to attorneys or counselors admitted to practice in the courts of this state pursuant to section 602.10101.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 provides:

Employer and employer representative participation in fact-finding interviews.

(1) "Participate," as the term is used for employers in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means submitting detailed factual information of the quantity and quality that if unrebutted would be sufficient to result in a decision favorable to the employer. The most effective means to participate is to provide live testimony at the interview from a witness with firsthand knowledge of the events leading to the separation. If no live testimony is provided, the employer must provide the name and telephone number of an employee with firsthand information who may be contacted, if necessary, for rebuttal. A party may also participate by providing detailed written statements or documents that provide detailed factual information of the events leading to separation. At a minimum, the information provided by the employer or the employer's representative must identify the dates and particular circumstances of the incident or incidents, including, in the case of discharge, the act or omissions of the claimant or, in the event of a voluntary separation, the stated reason for the quit. The specific rule or policy must be submitted if the claimant was discharged for violating such rule or policy. In the case of discharge for attendance violations, the information must include the circumstances of all incidents the employer or the employer's representative contends meet the definition of unexcused absences as set forth in 871—subrule 24.32(7). On the other hand, written or oral statements or general conclusions without supporting detailed factual information and information submitted after the fact-finding decision has been issued are not considered participation within the meaning of the statute.

(2) "A continuous pattern of nonparticipation in the initial determination to award benefits," pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, as the term is used for an entity representing employers, means on 25 or more occasions in a calendar quarter beginning with the first calendar quarter of 2009, the entity files appeals after failing to participate. Appeals filed but withdrawn before the day of the contested case hearing will not be considered in determining if a continuous pattern of nonparticipation exists. The division administrator shall notify the employer's representative in writing after each such appeal.

(3) If the division administrator finds that an entity representing employers as defined in Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, has engaged in a continuous pattern of nonparticipation, the division administrator shall suspend said representative for a period of up to six months on the first occasion, up to one year on the second occasion and up to ten years on the third or subsequent occasion. Suspension by the division administrator constitutes final agency action and may be appealed pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.19.

(4) "Fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual," as the term is used for claimants in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means providing knowingly false statements or knowingly false denials of material facts for the purpose of obtaining unemployment insurance benefits. Statements or denials may be either oral or written by the claimant. Inadvertent misstatements or mistakes made in good faith are not considered fraud or willful misrepresentation.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code section 96.3(7)"b" as amended by 2008 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2160.

The unemployment insurance law provides that benefits must be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later determined to be ineligible for benefits, even though the claimant acted in good faith and was not otherwise at fault. However, the overpayment will not be recovered when it is based on a reversal on appeal of an initial determination to award benefits on an issue regarding the claimant's employment separation if: (1) the benefits were not received due to any fraud or willful misrepresentation by the claimant and (2) the employer did not participate in the initial proceeding to award benefits. The employer will not be charged for benefits if it is determined that they did participate in the fact-finding interview. Iowa Code § 96.3(7), Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10.

Because claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which claimant was not entitled. The administrative law judge concludes that claimant has been overpaid unemployment insurance benefits in the amount of \$2,910.00 for five weeks between October 29 and December 16, 2023. There is no evidence that claimant received these benefits due to fraud or willful misrepresentation. Because the employer did not participate in the fact-finding interview, the claimant is not obligated to repay to the agency the benefits he received and the employer's account shall be charged.

DECISION:

The November 21, 2023, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. The claimant voluntarily quit without good cause attributable to the employer. Unemployment insurance benefits shall be withheld until claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times claimant's weekly benefit amount, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

Claimant has been overpaid regular unemployment insurance benefits in the gross amount of \$2,910.00 but is not obligated to repay the agency those benefits. The employer did not participate in the fact-finding interview and its account shall be charged.



Patrick B. Thomas
Administrative Law Judge

December 28, 2023
Decision Dated and Mailed

pbt/scn

APPEAL RIGHTS. If you disagree with the decision, you or any interested party may:

1. Appeal to the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days of the date under the judge's signature by submitting a written appeal via mail, fax, or online to:

**Iowa Employment Appeal Board
6200 Park Avenue Suite 100
Des Moines, Iowa 50321
Fax: (515)281-7191
Online: eab.iowa.gov**

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.

AN APPEAL TO THE BOARD SHALL 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.

An Employment Appeal Board decision is final agency action. If a party disagrees with the Employment Appeal Board decision, they may then file a petition for judicial review in district court.

2. If no one files an appeal of the judge's decision with the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days, the decision becomes final agency action, and you have the option to file a petition for judicial review in District Court within thirty (30) days after the decision becomes final. Additional information on how to file a petition can be found at Iowa Code §17A.19, which is online at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf> or by contacting the District Court Clerk of Court <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-directory/>.

Note to Parties: YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in the appeal or 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.

Note to Claimant: It is important that you file your weekly claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

SERVICE INFORMATION:

A true and correct copy of this decision was mailed to each of the parties listed.

DERECHOS DE APELACIÓN. Si no está de acuerdo con la decisión, usted o cualquier parte interesada puede:

1. Apelar a la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días de la fecha bajo la firma del juez presentando una apelación por escrito por correo, fax o en línea a:

**Iowa Employment Appeal Board
6200 Park Avenue Suite 100
Des Moines, Iowa 50321
Fax: (515)281-7191
En línea: eab.iowa.gov**

El período de apelación se extenderá hasta el siguiente día hábil si el último día para apelar cae en fin de semana o día feriado legal.

UNA APELACIÓN A LA JUNTA DEBE ESTABLECER CLARAMENTE:

- 1) El nombre, dirección y número de seguro social del reclamante.
- 2) Una referencia a la decisión de la que se toma la apelación.
- 3) Que se interponga recurso de apelación contra tal decisión y se firme dicho recurso.
- 4) Los fundamentos en que se funda dicho recurso.

Una decisión de la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo es una acción final de la agencia. Si una de las partes no está de acuerdo con la decisión de la Junta de Apelación de Empleo, puede presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el tribunal de distrito.

2. Si nadie presenta una apelación de la decisión del juez ante la Junta de Apelaciones Laborales dentro de los quince (15) días, la decisión se convierte en acción final de la agencia y usted tiene la opción de presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el Tribunal de Distrito dentro de los treinta (30) días después de que la decisión adquiriera firmeza. Puede encontrar información adicional sobre cómo presentar una petición en el Código de Iowa §17A.19, que se encuentra en línea en <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf> o comunicándose con el Tribunal de Distrito Secretario del tribunal <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-directory/>.

Nota para las partes: USTED PUEDE REPRESENTARSE en la apelación u obtener un abogado u otra parte interesada para que lo haga, siempre que no haya gastos para Workforce Development. Si desea ser representado por un abogado, puede obtener los servicios de un abogado privado o uno cuyos servicios se paguen con fondos públicos.

Nota para el reclamante: es importante que presente su reclamo semanal según las instrucciones, mientras esta apelación está pendiente, para proteger su derecho continuo a los beneficios.

SERVICIO DE INFORMACIÓN:

Se envió por correo una copia fiel y correcta de esta decisión a cada una de las partes enumeradas.