

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

68-0157 (9-06) - 3091078 - EI

LAWRENCE C BURTCHETT II
Claimant

APPEAL NO: 07A-UI-04042-DT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**HGI – LAKESIDE
TERRIBLE’S LAKESIDE CASINO**
Employer

**OC: 04/01/07 R: 03
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Lawrence C. Burtchett II (claimant) appealed a representative’s April 17, 2007 decision (reference 01) that concluded he was not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits after a separation from employment from HGI – Lakeside/Terrible’s Lakeside Casino (employer). After hearing notices were mailed to the parties’ last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on May 7, 2007. The claimant participated in the hearing. Carol Eckels appeared on the employer’s behalf. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the parties, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant discharged for work-connected misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The claimant started working for the employer on August 8, 2003. He worked full time as a dealer at the employer’s casino. His last day of work was March 27, 2007. The employer suspended him that day and discharged him on April 4, 2007. The stated reason for the discharge was urinating of the side of the casino boat.

On March 27 a housekeeper reported to the employer that on March 24 she had gone outside on the upper outside deck of the boat and had witnessed the claimant urinating off the side of the boat. When questioned, the claimant acknowledged that he had done this on at least one prior occasion, and did not deny that he had done so on this occasion. His explanation was that it had not been convenient to reenter the casino and traverse to the restroom.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has

the burden to establish the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct. Cosper v. IDJS, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982); Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a.

Iowa Code § 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 focus of the definition of misconduct is on acts or omissions by a claimant that "rise to the level of being deliberate, intentional or culpable." Henry v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 391 N.W.2d 731, 735 (Iowa App. 1986). The acts must show:

1. Willful and wanton disregard of an employer's interest, such as found in:
 - a. Deliberate violation of standards of behavior that the employer has the right to expect of its employees, or
 - b. Deliberate disregard of standards of behavior the employer has the right to expect of its employees; or
2. Carelessness or negligence of such degree of recurrence as to:
 - a. Manifest equal culpability, wrongful intent or evil design; or
 - b. Show an intentional and substantial disregard of:
 1. The employer's interest, or

2. The employee's duties and obligations to the employer.

The claimant's urination off the side of the casino boat, regardless of whether any patron or even whether any other employee had seen him, shows a willful or wanton disregard of the standard of behavior the employer has the right to expect from an employee, as well as an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests and of the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. The employer discharged the claimant for reasons amounting to work-connected misconduct.

DECISION:

The representative's April 17, 2007 decision (reference 01) is affirmed. The employer discharged the claimant for disqualifying reasons. The claimant is disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits as of March 27, 2007. This disqualification continues until the claimant has been paid ten times his weekly benefit amount for insured work, provided he is otherwise eligible. The employer's account will not be charged.

Lynette A. F. Donner
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

ld/pjs