

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

JASON BAUMGARTNER

Claimant

APPEAL 21A-UI-18150-AW-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

AGRI STAR MEAT & POULTRY LLC

Employer

OC: 06/06/21

Claimant: Appellant (2)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct
Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quitting

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from the August 12, 2021 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on October 11, 2021, at 1:00 p.m. Claimant participated. Employer did not participate. Claimant's Exhibit A was admitted. Official notice was taken of the administrative record.

ISSUE:

Whether claimant's separation was a discharge for disqualifying job-related misconduct or a voluntary quit without good cause attributable to employer.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

As claimant was the only witness, the administrative law judge makes the following findings of fact based solely upon claimant's testimony: Claimant was employed as a full-time Production Worker from September 2020 until his employment with Agri Star Meat and Poultry ended on June 10, 2021. Claimant worked Sunday through Thursday from 4:00 p.m. until the work was completed and half a day on Fridays. Claimant's direct supervisor was John Folton, Shipping Foreman.

Claimant last performed work for employer on June 6, 2021. Claimant was scheduled to work June 7, 2021 through June 10, 2021. Claimant reported to work each day but was unable to pass through the security gate because his access badge would not work. On June 10, 2021, claimant sent a text message to Folton inquiring about the status of his employment. Folton informed claimant that he had been discharged "for leaving n punching back in on Sunday n punching out." (Exhibit A)

Claimant did not punch in and get paid for work he had not performed. Claimant did not have any prior warnings. Claimant did not know that his job was in jeopardy.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant was discharged for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

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 disqualification shall continue 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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(1)(a) provides:

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 of misconduct has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Reigelsberger v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 500 N.W.2d 64, 66 (Iowa 1993); *accord Lee v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 616 N.W.2d 661, 665 (Iowa 2000). Further, the employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982).

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(4) provides:

(4) Report required. The claimant's statement and employer's statement must give detailed facts as to the specific reason for the claimant's discharge. Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. In cases where a suspension or disciplinary layoff exists, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct shall be resolved.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(8) provides:

(8) *Past acts of misconduct*. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

A determination as to whether an employee's act is misconduct does not rest solely on the interpretation or application of the employer's policy or rule. A violation is not necessarily disqualifying misconduct even if the employer was fully within its rights to impose discipline up to or including discharge for the incident under its policy. The issue is not whether the employer made a correct decision in separating claimant, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what misconduct warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. *Pierce v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988).

Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. Such misconduct must be "substantial." *Newman v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). The law limits disqualifying misconduct to substantial and willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. *Lee v. Employment Appeal Bd.*, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000). A failure in job performance is not misconduct unless it is intentional. *Huntoon*, supra; *Lee v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000).

Employer has produced no evidence of disqualifying job-related misconduct. Claimant was discharged for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

DECISION:

The August 12, 2021 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. Claimant was discharged for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed provided claimant is otherwise eligible.



Adrienne C. Williamson
Administrative Law Judge
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October 20, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

acw/kmj