

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

JASON C WENDT
646 SW KENWORTHY DR
ANKENY IA 50021

PELLA CORPORATION
c/o SHEAKLEY UNISERVICE INC
PO BOX 1160
COLUMBUS OH 43216-1160

Appeal Number: 05A-UI-03070-LT
OC: 02-20-05 R: 02
Claimant: Respondent (1)

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)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge/Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Employer filed a timely appeal from the March 16, 2005, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on April 11, 2005. Claimant did participate. Employer did participate through Jeff Staton, Tedd Pope, and Mark Dolch and was represented by Richard Carter of Sheakley Uniservice.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed as a full-time knife grinder/machinist through February 19, 2005 when he was discharged. On February 14, claimant was involved in a discussion with Travis Reilly who reported the incident to management. Claimant moved a cart around the corner that was obstructing his walkway while he was trying to carry a large sharp object. When he went to do

a second project, the cart was moved into the walkway again and claimant again moved it out of his way so it would not be in Reilly's way either. As claimant picked up the sharp object and turned to return to his work area, he noted that Reilly had moved the cart back into claimant's walkway. Claimant again moved the cart out of his walkway. Reilly called claimant an "asshole" and claimant asked him, "Do you have a problem with me?" Reilly is still employed but did not participate in the hearing. None of the employer's witnesses were present during the incident.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason.

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).

871 IAC 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.

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 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. IDJS, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa 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. IDJS, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa 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." When based on carelessness, the carelessness must actually indicate a "wrongful intent" to be disqualifying in nature. Newman v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa App. 1984). Poor work performance is not misconduct in the absence of evidence of intent. Miller v. Employment Appeal Board, 423 N.W.2d 211 (Iowa App. 1988).

An employer may discharge an employee for any number of reasons or no reason at all, but if it fails to meet its burden of proof to establish job related misconduct as the reason for the separation, employer incurs potential liability for unemployment insurance benefits related to that separation.

Moving a cart out of the walkway in order to carry a large, sharp object safely and asking another employee if he had a problem with claimant after that employee called him an "asshole" does not constitute harassment or a threat and does not rise to the level of disqualifying misconduct. Inasmuch as the employer has not established a current or final act of misconduct, benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The March 16, 2005, reference 01, decision is affirmed. The claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

dml/sc