

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

HARRIET R STOCKTON  
1301 AETNA  
BURLINGTON IA 52601

WAL-MART STORES INC  
c/o FRICK UC EXPRESS  
PO BOX 283  
ST LOUIS MO 63166-0283

Appeal Number: 04A-UI-00571-SWT  
OC 12/07/03 R 04  
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, 4<sup>th</sup> 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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated January 7, 2004, reference 01, that concluded the claimant's discharge was not for work-connected misconduct. A telephone hearing was held on February 9, 2004. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. The claimant participated in the hearing. Chad Sloat participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer. Exhibit One was admitted into evidence at the hearing.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The claimant worked for the employer as an overnight stocker from March 18, 1995 to December 3, 2003. The claimant was informed and understood that under the employer's work rules, profanity in the workplace was prohibited.

On December 3, 2003, the claimant became frustrated when she could not get anyone to help her on a project she was working on. The claimant sat down on the pallet of merchandise that she was unpacking for a short period of time because she was upset and was observed by an assistant manager. She was instructed to go back to work, which she did. The assistant manager reported that the claimant had refused to work and had directed profanity toward him, which was untrue. The employer discharged the claimant on December 3, 2003, for using profanity in the workplace. The claimant had never been warned about similar conduct in the past.

#### REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue in this case is whether the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law.

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 to prove the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The propriety of a discharge is not at issue in an unemployment insurance case. An employer may be justified in discharging an employee, but the employee's conduct may not amount to misconduct precluding the payment of unemployment compensation. 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 Board, 616 N.W.2d 661, 665 (Iowa 2000).

The findings of fact show how I resolved the disputed factual issues in this case by carefully assessing the credibility of the witnesses and reliability of the evidence and by applying the proper standard and burden of proof. The employer's representative had hearsay evidence of the final incident. The claimant denied the allegations that she had refused work and used profanity and her testimony was very credible. While the employer may have been justified in discharging the claimant, work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law has not been established in this case.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated January 7, 2004, reference 01, is affirmed. The claimant is qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits, if she is otherwise eligible.

saw/kjf