

**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 T SYLVARA  
1238 E 26<sup>TH</sup> CT  
DES MOINES IA 50317**

**AMERICAN LAWN CARE INC  
5880 NW 2<sup>ND</sup> AVE  
PO BOX 4186  
DES MOINES IA 50333-4186**

**Appeal Number: 04A-UI-00121-D  
OC: 11/16/03 R: 02  
Claimant: Respondent (1/R)**

**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.

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(Administrative Law Judge)

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(Decision Dated & Mailed)

**Section 96.6-2 – Timeliness of Protest**

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

American Lawn Care, Inc. (employer) appealed a representative's December 24, 2003 decision (reference 01) that concluded Jason T. Sylvara (claimant) was qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits and the employer's account might be charged because the employer's protest was not timely filed. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, an in-person hearing was held on January 26, 2004. The claimant participated in the hearing. Melinda Ginger appeared on the employer's behalf. During the hearing, Agency Exhibit One was entered into evidence. 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 affirming the representative's decision and allowing the claimant benefits.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The claimant established a claim for unemployment insurance benefits effective November 16, 2003 after a layoff from the employer. A notice of claim was mailed to the employer's last-known address of record on November 19, 2003. The employer received the notice on November 20, 2003. The notice contained a warning that a protest must be postmarked or received by the Agency by December 1, 2003. The protest was not filed until it was faxed on December 20, 2003, which is after the date noticed on the notice of claim.

The reason for the delay is that the employer did not intend to challenge the claimant's initial eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits immediately after the layoff. However, as of December 20, 2003, the employer concluded that the claimant had refused offers to return to work and was not able and available for work, and so wished to challenged his eligibility from that time on those grounds.

#### REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue in this matter is whether the employer filed a timely protest. The law provides that all interested parties shall be promptly notified about an individual filing a claim. The parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of claim to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. Iowa Code Section 96.6-2. Another portion of Iowa Code Section 96.6-2 dealing with timeliness of an appeal from a representative's decision states an appeal must be filed within ten days after notification of that decision was mailed. In addressing an issue of timeliness of an appeal under that portion of this Code section, the Iowa Supreme Court has held that this statute clearly limits the time to do so, and compliance with the appeal notice provision is mandatory and jurisdictional. Beardslee v. IDJS, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979).

The administrative law judge considers the reasoning and holding of the Beardslee court controlling on the portion of Iowa Code Section 96.6-2 which deals with the time limit to file a protest after the notice of claim has been mailed to the employer. Compliance with the protest provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. Beardslee, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also In re Appeal of Elliott, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). Pursuant to rules 871 IAC 26.2(96)(1) and 871 IAC 24.35(96)(1), protests are considered filed when postmarked, if mailed. Messina v. IDJS, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983). The question in this case thus becomes whether the employer was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert a protest in a timely fashion. Hendren v. IESC, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); Smith v. IESC, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973). The record shows that the employer did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely protest.

871 IAC 24.35(2) provides in pertinent part:

The submission of any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the department that the delay in submission was due to department error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service or its successor.

The employer has not shown that the delay for not complying with the jurisdictional time limit was due to department error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service. Since the employer filed the protest late without any legal excuse, the employer did not file a timely protest. Since the administrative law judge concludes that the protest was not timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code Section 96.6-2, the administrative law judge lacks

jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the protest and the reasons for the claimant's separation from employment, regardless of the merits of the employer's protest. See, Beardslee v. IDJS, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979); Franklin v. IDJS, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979) and Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company v. Employment Appeal Board, 465 N.W.2d 674 (Iowa App. 1990).

Issues as to whether the claimant had refused suitable work or recall to work and whether he was able and available for work arose during the hearing. These issues were not included in the notice of hearing for this case, and the case will be remanded for an investigation and preliminary determination on that issue. 871 IAC 26.14(5).

**DECISION:**

The December 24, 2003 (reference 01) decision is affirmed. The protest in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative remains in effect. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible. The matter is remanded to the Claims Section for investigation and determination of the refusal and able and available issues.

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