

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

**NYAKEK TETE**  
Claimant

**TYSON FRESH MEATS INC**  
Employer

**APPEAL 18A-UI-11597-AW-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 11/04/18**  
**Claimant: Appellant (2)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2) – Discharge for Misconduct  
Iowa Admin r. 871-24.32 – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Nyakek Tete, Claimant, filed an appeal from the November 20, 2018 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits because she was discharged from work with Tyson Fresh Meats, Inc. due to violation of a known company rule. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on January 4, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. Claimant participated. Nuer interpretation was provided by Dhoal from International Translation Services (ITS). Employer did not participate. No exhibits were admitted.

**ISSUE:**

Whether claimant's separation was a discharge due to disqualifying job-related misconduct.

**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 full-time as a production worker from August 15, 2013 until her employment with Tyson Fresh Meats, Inc. ended on October 29, 2018.

On October 29, 2018, claimant was discharged. The reason provided was that claimant splashed water on a co-worker in violation of a company rule or policy. Claimant denies splashing water on a co-worker. Claimant was not given an opportunity to explain herself to her employer before she was discharged. Claimant is not aware of any policy she violated and knows no reason why she was fired. Claimant did not believe that her job was in jeopardy.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

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

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).

There is no evidence of misconduct. Claimant denies violating any of employer's policies. Employer did not meet its burden of proving disqualifying, job-related misconduct. Benefits are allowed.

**DECISION:**

The November 20, 2018 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. Benefits are allowed, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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