

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

68-0157 (9-06) - 3091078 - EI

SAMUEL K ASAMOAH
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 12A-UI-02585-JTT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

TYSON FRESH MEATS INC
Employer

OC: 01/15/12
Claimant: Respondent (1)

Section 96.5(2)(a) – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the March 6, 2012, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on March 29, 2012. Claimant Samuel Asamoah participated. Jamal Grcic, human resources clerk, represented the employer. Exhibit One was received into evidence.

ISSUE:

Whether the claimant separated from the employment for a reason that disqualifies him for unemployment insurance benefits.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Samuel Asamoah was employed by Tyson Fresh Meats as a full-time production worker from 2009 and last performed work for the employer on January 16, 2012. Mr. Asamoah's work hours were 3:00 p.m. to 12:30 a.m., Monday through Friday. On January 16, 2012, at 10:00 p.m., Mr. Asamoah's supervisor directed Mr. Asamoah to report to the office. Once there, a manager questioned Mr. Asamoah about whether he had used some 180 degree water in the vicinity of his work area. Mr. Asamoah indicated he had not. In the course of the discussion with the manager, the manager accused Mr. Asamoah of raising his voice. The manager directed Mr. Asamoah to go home and told him that the personnel office would be in contact with him. Mr. Asamoah waited for the call from the employer's personnel office, but the call never came. Meanwhile, the employer documented Mr. Asamoah as a no-call, no-show on January 17, 18, 19, 20, 23 and 24 before the employer ended the employment. Based on the directive Mr. Asamoah had received from the supervisor, he did not know that he was expected to report to on those days.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF 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.

The employer has the burden of proof in this matter. See Iowa Code section 96.6(2). Misconduct must be substantial in order to justify a denial of unemployment benefits. Misconduct serious enough to warrant the discharge of an employee is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits. See Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000). The focus is on deliberate, intentional, or culpable acts by the employee. See Gimbel v. Employment Appeal Board, 489 N.W.2d 36, 39 (Iowa Ct. App. 1992).

While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of the current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act(s). The termination of employment must be based on a current act. See 871 IAC 24.32(8). In determining whether the conduct that prompted the discharge constituted a "current act," the administrative law judge considers the date on which the conduct came to the attention of the employer and the date on which the employer notified the claimant that the conduct subjected the claimant to possible discharge. See also Greene v. EAB, 426 N.W.2d 659, 662 (Iowa App. 1988).

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. See 871 IAC 24.32(4). When it is in a party's power to produce more direct and satisfactory evidence than is actually produced, it may fairly

be inferred that the more direct evidence will expose deficiencies in that party's case. See Crosser v. Iowa Dept. of Public Safety, 240 N.W.2d 682 (Iowa 1976).

In order for a claimant's absences to constitute misconduct that would disqualify the claimant from receiving unemployment insurance benefits, the evidence must establish that the claimant's *unexcused* absences were excessive. See 871 IAC 24.32(7). The determination of whether absenteeism is excessive necessarily requires consideration of past acts and warnings. However, the evidence must first establish that the most recent absence that prompted the decision to discharge the employee was unexcused. See 871 IAC 24.32(8). Absences related to issues of personal responsibility such as transportation and oversleeping are considered unexcused. On the other hand, absences related to illness are considered excused, provided the employee has complied with the employer's policy regarding notifying the employer of the absence. Tardiness is a form of absence. See Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984).

The employer has failed to present sufficient evidence, and sufficiently direct and satisfactory evidence, to establish either a voluntary quit or a discharge for misconduct. The evidence in the record establishes that the employer indefinitely suspended Mr. Asamoah on January 16, 2012 for allegedly raising his voice. The employer has presented no evidence whatsoever to establish misconduct in connection with the meeting that took place on January 16 or the alleged conduct that prompted that meeting. The employer has presented insufficient evidence to rebut Mr. Asamoah's assertion that he was absent on January 17 through 24 only because the employer had told him to go home and wait for a call from personnel. The evidence establishes no unexcused absences.

Based on the evidence in the record and application of the appropriate law, the administrative law judge concludes that Mr. Asamoah was discharged for no disqualifying reason. Accordingly, Mr. Asamoah is eligible for benefits, provided he is otherwise eligible. The employer's account may be charged for benefits paid to Mr. Asamoah.

DECISION:

The Agency representative's March 6, 2012, reference 01, decision is affirmed. The claimant was discharged for no disqualifying reason. The claimant is eligible for benefits, provided he is otherwise eligible. The employer's account may be charged.

James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

jet/kjw