

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

MARQUIS C JONES

Claimant

APPEAL NO. 06A-UI-11850-LT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

MINNESOTA MINING & MFG CO

Employer

**OC: 10-15-06 R: 02
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge/Misconduct
871 IAC 24.32(7) – Excessive Unexcused Absenteeism

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the November 27, 2006, reference 03, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a telephone conference hearing was held on December 28, 2006. Claimant participated. Employer participated through Larry Conley.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether claimant was discharged for reasons related to job misconduct sufficient to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having heard the testimony and having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed as a full time sheet cutter from January 3, 2006 until July 1, 2006, when he was discharged. His last absence occurred when he was tardy to a department meeting at the end of the shift On June 9. He reported to the team leader he was ill and was in the restroom and was feeling dizzy.

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(7) provides:

(7) Excessive unexcused absenteeism. Excessive unexcused absenteeism is an intentional disregard of the duty owed by the claimant to the employer and shall be considered misconduct except for illness or other reasonable grounds for which the employee was absent and that were properly reported to the employer.

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.

Excessive absences are not considered misconduct unless unexcused. Absences due to properly reported illness or injury cannot constitute job misconduct since they are not volitional. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982).

An employer may discharge an employee for any number of reasons or no reason at all if it is not contrary to public policy, 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. In the case of an illness, it would seem reasonable that employer would not want an employee to report to work if they are at risk of infecting other employees or customers. Certainly, an employee who is ill or injured is not able to perform their job at peak levels. A reported absence related to illness or injury is excused for the purpose of the Iowa Employment Security Act. An employer's point system or no-fault absenteeism policy is not dispositive of the issue of qualification for benefits. Because the final absence (tardiness to a meeting) for which he was discharged was related to properly reported illness, no final or current incident of unexcused absenteeism has been established and no disqualification is imposed. Furthermore, even though employer essentially suspended claimant pending a decision about the separation, three weeks was an unreasonable amount of time in which to make that decision, thus rendering the final incident not current. Benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The November 27, 2006, reference 03, decision is affirmed. The claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

Dévon M. Lewis
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

dml/kjw