

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

WILLIAM D RENCH
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 12A-UI-13792-JTT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

JON PAGE
J R PAGE TRUCKING
Employer

OC: 01/02/11
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code Section 96.5(3) – Refusal of Suitable Work
Iowa Code Section 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

William Rench filed an appeal from an overpayment decision that the Appeals Section treated as also an appeal from the April 27, 2011, reference 01, decision that denied benefits effective January 31, 2011 based on an agency conclusion that Mr. Rench had refused an offer of suitable work without good cause. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on December 19, 2012. Mr. Rench participated. Jon Page represented the employer. The hearing in this matter was consolidated with the hearing in Appeal Number 12A-UI-13793-JTT. Department Exhibits D-1, D-2 and D-3 were received into evidence. The administrative law judge took official notice of the agency's administrative record of benefits disbursed to the claimant.

ISSUE:

Whether there is good cause to treat Mr. Rench's late appeal from the April 27, 2011, reference 01 disqualification decision as a timely appeal.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: On April 26, 2011, Mr. Rench participated in a fact-finding interview the purpose of which was to discuss whether Mr. Rench had refused an offer of suitable work from J R Page Trucking on January 31, 2011 without good cause. On April 27, 2011, the Workforce Development representative entered a reference 01 decision that denied benefits effective January 31, 2011 based on an agency conclusion that Mr. Rench had refused an offer of suitable work without good cause. On April 27, 2011, Workforce Development mailed a copy of the April 27, 2011, reference 01 decision to Mr. Rench's last-known address of record. Mr. Rench received the decision in a timely manner, prior to the deadline for appeal. The decision contained a warning that any appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Section no later than May 7, 2011. Mr. Rench did not file an appeal from the April 27, 2011 decision prior to the May 7, 2011 deadline.

Mr. Rench did not take any steps to file an appeal from the April 27, 2011, disqualification decision until after he received a related overpayment decision in November 2012. The November 16, 2012, reference 03, overpayment decision was mailed to Mr. Rench on November 16, 2012 and contained a November 26, 2012 deadline for appeal. On November 20, 2012, Mr. Rench's wife drafted and faxed an appeal to the Appeals Section. The Appeals Section received the appeal the same day. The Appeals Section treated the appeal from the overpayment decision as also an appeal from the disqualification decision entered a year and a half earlier.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.6-2 provides:

2. Initial determination. A representative designated by the director shall promptly notify all interested parties to the claim of its filing, and the parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of the filing of the claim by ordinary mail to the last known address to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. The claimant has the burden of proving that the claimant meets the basic eligibility conditions of section 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to section 96.5, except as provided by this subsection. The claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence showing that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsection 10, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to section 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraphs "a" through "h". Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision. If an administrative law judge affirms a decision of the representative, or the appeal board affirms a decision of the administrative law judge allowing benefits, the benefits shall be paid regardless of any appeal which is thereafter taken, but if the decision is finally reversed, no employer's account shall be charged with benefits so paid and this relief from charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

The ten-day deadline for appeal begins to run on the date Workforce Development mails the decision to the parties. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the Agency representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev., 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); Johnson v. Board of Adjustment, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

An appeal submitted by mail is deemed filed on the date it is mailed as shown by the postmark or in the absence of a postmark the postage meter mark of the envelope in which it was received, or if not postmarked or postage meter marked or if the mark is illegible, on the date entered on the document as the date of completion. See 871 AC 24.35(1)(a). See also Messina v. IDJS, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983). An appeal submitted by any other means is

deemed filed on the date it is received by the Unemployment Insurance Division of Iowa Workforce Development. See 871 IAC 24.35(1)(b).

The appeal in question was filed on November 20, 2012, when the Appeals Section received Mr. Rench's faxed appeal.

The evidence in the record establishes that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date of the April 27, 2011 decision and the date this appeal was filed. Indeed, there was more than a year and a half lapse between the two events.

The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. Franklin v. IDJS, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. Beardslee v. IDJS, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also In re Appeal of Elliott, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case thus becomes whether Mr. Rench was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal 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 Mr. Rench did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal, but did not do so.

Mr. Rench's failure to file a timely appeal within the time prescribed by the Iowa Employment Security Law was not due to any Workforce Development error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service. See 871 IAC 24.35(2). The administrative law judge further concludes that the appeal was not timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6(2), and the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the appeal. See, Beardslee v. IDJS, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and Franklin v. IDJS, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

DECISION:

The Agency representative's April 27, 2011, reference 01, disqualification decision is affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative remains in effect.

James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

jet/pjs