

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

NICHOLAS SENGCHAN
Claimant

ENGLISH ESTATES INC
Employer

APPEAL 17A-UI-03821-JP-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**OC: 02/19/17
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct
Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Quitting
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 – Employer/Representative Participation Fact-finding Interview
Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed an appeal from the March 10, 2017, (reference 02) unemployment insurance decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call on May 2, 2017. Claimant did not participate. Employer participated through owner Matthew Marchese. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative record, including claimant's benefit payment history, fact-finding documents, and the employer's appeal letter and envelope, with no objection.

ISSUE:

Is the appeal timely?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: An unemployment insurance decision that allowed benefits from February 19, 2017 until February 25, 2017 was mailed to the employer's last-known address of record on March 10, 2017. The employer received the decision. The employer has been at the address of record for a little over a year. Mr. Marchese testified it normally takes two or three days for the mail to get from Des Moines, Iowa to Sioux City, Iowa. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Bureau by March 20, 2017. The appeal was not filed until April 3, 2017 (postmark date on the appeal envelope), which is after the date noticed on the unemployment insurance decision.

On March 31, 2017, claimant and three other former employees met with Mr. Marchese to return their uniforms and sign a termination of employment form. On March 31, 2017, the employer had already received the unemployment insurance decision regarding claimant that allowed benefits from February 19, 2017 until February 25, 2017, but the employer wanted to

wait until after it met with claimant before filing its appeal. The employer wanted to meet with claimant a month earlier, but he did not come in for the meeting until March 31, 2017.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow the administrative law judge concludes the employer's appeal is untimely.

Iowa Code § 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 calendar days for appeal begins running on the mailing date. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the 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. Bd. of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

The record in this case shows that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from unemployment insurance 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. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 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. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 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 the appellant was deprived of a

reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. Iowa Emp't Sec. Comm'n*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. Iowa Emp't Sec. Comm'n*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973). Pursuant to Iowa Admin. Code rules 871-26.2(96)(1) and 871-24.35(96)(1), appeals are considered filed when postmarked, if mailed. *Messina v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983). The postage meter mark on the last day for filing does not perfect a timely appeal if the postmark affixed by the United States Postal Service is beyond the filing date. *Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co. of Cedar Rapids v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 465 N.W.2d 674 (Iowa Ct. App. 1990).

The record shows that the appellant did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal. The employer's decision to wait until after it met with claimant and to have him sign a termination form before filing its appeal was a business decision. The administrative law judge concludes that failure to follow the clear written instructions to file a timely appeal within the time prescribed by the Iowa Employment Security Law *was not due to any Agency error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service* pursuant to Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2). The administrative law judge further concludes that the appeal was not timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code § 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. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

DECISION:

The March 10, 2017, (reference 02) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative remains in effect.

Jeremy Peterson
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

jp/rvs