

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

COMFORT B MENSAH
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 14A-UI-03935-S2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

TYSON FRESH MEATS INC
Employer

OC: 03/16/14
Claimant: Respondent (1)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Tyson Fresh Meats (employer) appealed a representative's April 2, 2014, decision (reference 01) that concluded Comfort Mensah (claimant) was discharged and there was no evidence of willful or deliberate misconduct. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for May 1, 2014. The claimant participated personally through Eugene Frimton, Interpreter. The employer participated by Kristi Fox, Human Resources Clerk.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the claimant was separated from employment for any disqualifying reason.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was hired on October 8, 2012, as a full-time production worker. The claimant signed for receipt of the employer's handbook on October 8, 2012. The employer has a policy that states an employee will be terminated if she accumulates ten attendance points. On January 21 and February 11, 2014, the employer issued the claimant written warnings for absenteeism. The employer notified the claimant that further infractions could result in termination from employment. The claimant did not properly report her absences due to medical reasons on February 6 and 7, 2014. She did provide a doctor's note for those days. The claimant properly reported her absences due to medical issues on January 6, 20, 21, and March 5, 2014. The employer terminated the claimant for excessive absenteeism on March 11, 2014.

The claimant filed for unemployment insurance benefits with an effective date of March 16, 2014. She received \$2,070.00 in benefits after the separation from employment. The employer is unaware of who participated in the fact-finding interview on April 1, 2014.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was not discharged for misconduct.

Iowa Code § 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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(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.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Huntoon v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

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.

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Excessive absences are not misconduct unless unexcused. Absences due to properly reported illness can never constitute job misconduct since they are not volitional. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The employer must establish not only misconduct but that there was a final incident of misconduct which precipitated the discharge. The last incident of

absence was a properly reported illness which occurred on March 5, 2014. The claimant's absence does not amount to job misconduct because it was properly reported. The employer has failed to provide any evidence of willful and deliberate misconduct which would be a final incident leading to the discharge. The claimant was discharged but there was no misconduct.

DECISION:

The representative's April 2, 2014, decision (reference 01) is affirmed. The employer has not met its proof to establish job related misconduct. Benefits are allowed.

Beth A. Scheetz
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

bas/pjs