

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

SHAWN R KILPATRICK
Claimant

TYSON PREPARED FOODS INC
Employer

APPEAL 14A-UI-10209-LT
**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 08/17/14
Claimant: Appellant (6)

Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

An appeal was filed from an unemployment insurance decision dated September 26, 2014, (reference 02) that deducted vacation pay from benefits for the one week ending August 23, 2014. Notice of hearing was mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 1:00 p.m. on October 22, 2014. A review of the Appeals Bureau's Clear2there conference call system after 1:30 p.m. the same day shows the claimant/appellant failed to respond to the hearing notice and provide a telephone number at which he could be reached for the hearing and no hearing was held. The appellant called in response to the administrative law judge's (ALJ) message at 1:36 p.m., after the hearing record was closed.

ISSUES:

Should the hearing record be reopened?

Should the appeal be dismissed based upon the appellant not participating in the hearing?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The parties were properly notified of the scheduled hearing for this appeal. The appellant failed to provide a telephone number at which the appellant could be reached for the hearing and did not participate in the hearing or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice. Official notice of the Clear2there hearing control screen is taken to establish that appellant did not call or register online with the Appeals Bureau to provide a telephone number and/or name of a representative. He did not call the number on the hearing notice to ask for a postponement, assistance, more information, or to provide contact information. During the late call the appellant indicated he had not followed the hearing notice instruction and had assumed his number "was on file." This was not responsive to the clear hearing notice instructions set for both parties to follow.

The hearing notice instruction specifically advises parties:

Immediately register your phone number online or by calling one of the numbers provided below for a telephone hearing scheduled for:

Date: WED OCT 22, 2014

Iowa Time: 1:00 PM

The judge will not call you on the day of the hearing if you have not registered your phone number with the Appeals Bureau in Des Moines, Iowa as instructed below.

The back page of the hearing notice provides further instruction and warning:

If you do not participate in the hearing because you do not register for the hearing, register late, or cannot be reached at the number you provided when the judge calls for the hearing, the appeal may be dismissed or decided based on other available evidence. **The judge will not call you unless you register online or by phone before the hearing and give your phone number to the Appeals Bureau as instructed on the front side of this notice.** This is true even if agency representatives previously contacted you directly or you provided your phone number on some written documentation.

As a courtesy to the appellant the record was left open for a minimum of 15 minutes after the hearing start time to give the appellant a reasonable opportunity to participate. This reasonable amount of time is appropriate because if a hearing were conducted with the non-appealing party alone it would have likely concluded in 15 minutes or less. Allowing additional time would prejudice the non-appealing party for appearing in a timely manner. The 15 minute wait time is also a reasonable period to hold the record open as insufficient time would remain to conduct a quality due process hearing in the time allotted by the Appeals Bureau. Each two-party hearing is allowed 60 minutes and a one-party hearing allowed 30 minutes. Holding the appellant in default for failure to appear and participate during a 15 to 30 minute window after the hearing start time is entirely reasonable considering the time allocated for unemployment hearings.

The representative's decision had concluded that the claimant was ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The Iowa Administrative Procedures Act at Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) provides in pertinent part:

If a party fails to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding after proper service of notice, the presiding officer may, if no adjournment is granted, enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party. ... If a decision is rendered against a party who failed to appear for the hearing and the presiding officer is timely requested by that party to vacate the decision for good cause, the time for initiating a further appeal is stayed pending a determination by the presiding officer to grant or deny the request. If adequate reasons are provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall vacate the decision and, after proper service of notice, conduct another evidentiary hearing. If adequate reasons are not provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall deny the motion to vacate.

The Agency rules at Iowa Admin. Code r. 26.14(7) provide:

If a party has not responded to a notice of telephone hearing by providing the appeals bureau with the names and telephone numbers of the persons who are participating in the hearing by the scheduled starting time of the hearing or is not available at the telephone number provided, the presiding officer may proceed with the hearing. If the appealing party fails to provide a telephone number or is unavailable for the hearing, the presiding officer may decide the appealing party is in default and dismiss the appeal as provided in Iowa Code § 17A.12(3). The record may be reopened if the absent party makes a request to reopen the hearing under subrule 26.8(3) and shows good cause for reopening the hearing.

a. If an absent party responds to the hearing notice while the hearing is in progress, the presiding officer shall pause to admit the party, summarize the hearing to that point, administer the oath, and resume the hearing.

b. If a party responds to the notice of hearing after the record has been closed and any party which has participated is no longer on the telephone line, the presiding officer shall not take the evidence of the late party. Instead, the presiding officer shall inquire ex parte as to why the party was late in responding to the notice of hearing. For good cause shown, the presiding officer shall reopen the record and cause further notice of hearing to be issued to all parties of record. The record shall not be reopened if the presiding officer does not find good cause for the party's late response to the notice of hearing.

c. *Failure to read or follow the instructions on the notice of hearing shall not constitute good cause for reopening the record.* (Emphasis added.)

Due process requires notice and an opportunity to be heard, both of which were provided to the parties. This rule does not provide exceptions for good intentions and/or a party contacting the Appeals Bureau within a reasonable amount of time after the hearing is scheduled, or for a party to use alternative methods in an attempt to register contact information for the hearing. It can be assumed an appellant intends to participate in the hearing simply by the fact an appeal is filed, but their responsibility does not end there and all parties are required to follow the specific written instructions printed on the hearing notice. Due process does not require the non-appealing party and the Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau to wait for indefinite periods see if an appellant wants or remembers to prosecute the appeal. The appellant filed the appeal and is held solely responsible for going forward with the case in an expeditious manner. The rule holds appellant in default if not present at the start of hearing. As a courtesy, appellant was granted additional time not required by statute or rule. Here, notwithstanding additional time, notice and opportunity, the appellant failed to prosecute the case expeditiously and as such the appellant is in default and the appeal shall be dismissed. Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.14(7). The representative's decision remains in force and effect.

The appellant appealed the unemployment insurance decision but failed to participate in the hearing. The appellant has not established emergency or other good-cause reason for failing to respond to the clear hearing notice instructions or call and request a postponement of the hearing date and/or time. Thus, the record shall not be reopened. The appellant has therefore defaulted on his appeal pursuant to Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 871 24.14(7), and the decision remains in force and effect.

DECISION:

The appellant is in default and the appeal is dismissed. The record shall not be reopened. The unemployment insurance decision dated September 26, 2014, (reference 02) denying benefits remains in effect.

Dévon M. Lewis
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

dml/css