

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

PAMELA R NEWMAN
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 13A-UI-10973-JTT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

TYSON FRESH MEATS INC
Employer

OC: 08/11/13
Claimant: Respondent (1)

Iowa Code Section 96.5(2)(a) – Discharge
Iowa Code Section 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed an appeal from the September 4, 2013, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits and that held the employer's account could be charged for benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on October 15, 2013. The claimant participated. Kristi Fox of Tyson Fresh Meats represented the employer and presented testimony through Danny Robinson of Talx/Equifax. Exhibits D-1 and D-2 were received into evidence.

ISSUE:

Whether the appeal was timely. Whether there is good cause to treat the appeal as timely.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: On September 4, 2013, Iowa Workforce Development mailed a copy of the September 4, 2013, reference 01, decision to the employer's address of record: c/o Talx UCM Services, Inc., P.O. Box 283, St. Louis, MO 63166. The decision allowed benefits and held the employer's account could be charged for benefits. The employer's representative received the decision on September 6, 2013. The decision contained a warning that an appeal from the decision must be postmarked by September 14, 2013 or received by the Appeals Section by that date. On September 10, 2013, Danny Robinson, Talx/Equifax Unemployment State Consultant, created an appeal letter and sent the letter electronically to the Talx processing center in St. Louis. Mr. Robinson is stationed in Columbus, Ohio. The Talx processing center generates thousands of letters each day. There is nothing to indicate that a hard copy appeal letter ever left the Talx processing center on or before the September 14, 2013 deadline. On September 27, 2013, the Appeals Section received an appeal letter from Talx. The letter is dated September 10, 2013. The letter was mailed by Talx in an envelope that bears a September 23, 2013 postage meter mark.

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 September 23, 2013, the date of the postage meter mark on the envelope in which the appeal was mailed.

The evidence in the record establishes 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 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 the appellant 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 the appellant did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal.

The weight of evidence indicates neither Talx/Equifax nor the employer transmitted or mailed an appeal letter to the Appeals Section prior to the deadline for appeal. The weight of the evidence indicates instead an error with Talx or its third-party mail handler that prevented the appeal from entering the U.S. mail system prior to September 23, 2013. The September 23, 2013 postage meter mark is evidence that the problem occurred prior to the document hitting the U.S. mail system.

The administrative law judge concludes that 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 September 4, 2013, reference 01, decision is affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative that allowed benefits and that held the employer's account could be charged remains in effect.

James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

jet/pjs