

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

MICHAEL N VAN DORN
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 07A-UI-03238-MT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

WEST LIBERTY FOODS LLC
Employer

OC: 02/25/07 R: 04
Claimant: Respondent (1)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Employer filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated March 21, 2007, reference 01, which held claimant eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a telephone conference hearing was scheduled for and held on April 16, 2007. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Jamie Ruesf, Human Resource Manager and Elizabeth Johnson, Safety Supervisor.

ISSUE:

The issue in this matter is whether claimant was discharged for misconduct.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for employer on February 19, 2007.

Claimant was discharged on February 26, 2007 by employer because claimant failed to lock out and tag out a fryer. The electrical panel had the fire safety and the equipment hooked into the same circuit. Claimant could not lock out the machine without disabling the fire safety equipment. The machine had 400 degree oil in the fryer. The oil is flammable. Claimant could not work on the machine without creating a fire safety hazard.

Claimant was aware of the policy. Claimant could not follow the policy due to a design defect in the electrical panel.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 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.

871 IAC 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 Department of Job Service, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

871 IAC 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.

In this matter, the evidence fails to establish that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning lock out tag out. Claimant was warned concerning this policy.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, fails to constitute misconduct because the machine had a design defect that prevented a safe lock out tag out. Claimant did not intentionally violate policy. Claimant was in an untenable position of two unsafe situations. This is not carelessness or an intentional act. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was not discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is not disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated March 21, 2007, reference 01, is affirmed. Claimant is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits, provided claimant meets all other eligibility requirements.

Marlon Mormann
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

mdm/pjs