

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

KENNETH SUMMERS

Claimant

APPEAL NO: 09A-UI-17405-BT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

CARGILL MEAT SOLUTIONS CORP

Employer

OC: 10/25/09

Claimant: Appellant (2)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)(a) - Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Kenneth Summers (claimant) appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated November 16, 2009, reference 01, which held that he was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits because he voluntarily quit his employment with Cargill Meat Solutions Corporation (employer) without good cause attributable to the employer. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on December 29, 2009. The claimant participated in the hearing. The employer provided a telephone number but was not available when that number was called for the hearing, and therefore, did not participate. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the party, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the employer discharged the claimant for work-related misconduct?

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 as a full-time production worker on December 4, 2007 and he worked through June 15, 2009. Although he was still employed, he stopped working after this date due to a non-work-related medical condition. The claimant testified he was discharged on August 25, 2009 for failure to report but claims he did report his absences. He was released without restrictions on September 10, 2009 and is able to return to work.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue is whether the employer discharged the claimant for work-connected misconduct. A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a.

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.

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.

The employer has the burden to prove the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The propriety of a discharge is not at issue in an unemployment insurance case. An employer may be justified in discharging an employee, but the employee's conduct may not amount to misconduct precluding the payment of unemployment compensation. The law limits disqualifying misconduct to substantial and willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661, 665 (Iowa 2000).

When misconduct is alleged as the reason for the discharge and subsequent disqualification of benefits, it is incumbent upon the employer to present evidence in support of its allegations. Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. 871 IAC 24.32(4). The employer did not participate in the hearing and failed to provide any evidence. The evidence provided by the claimant does not rise to the level of job misconduct as that term is defined in the above stated Administrative Rule. The claimant's testimony was not particularly credible because he had difficulty answering the questions posed to him. However, he was the only party to provide evidence. Consequently, the employer failed to meet its burden. Work-connected misconduct has not been established in this case and benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated November 16, 2009, reference 01, is reversed. The claimant was discharged. Misconduct has not been established. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

Susan D. Ackerman
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

sda/css