

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

MELISSA S SKOUGE
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 13A-UI-09422-S2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**WILSEY COMPANY PELLA PRODUCTS
AND SPECIALTIES**
Employer

OC: 07/14/13
Claimant: Appellant (2)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Melissa Skouge (claimant) appealed a representative's August 12, 2013, decision (reference 02) that concluded she was not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits because she was discharged from work with Wilsey Company Pella Products and Specialties (employer) for excessive unexcused absenteeism and tardiness after having been warned. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for September 20, 2013. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Chris Namanny, Human Resource.

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 May 7, 2012, as a full-time service coordinator. The employer has a handbook but the claimant does not recall receiving the handbook. On February 7 and May 24, 2013, the employer issued the claimant a performance evaluation that included a written warning for absenteeism. The employer notified the claimant that further infractions could result in termination from employment. On June 13 and 14, 2013, the employer talked to the claimant about her absenteeism. The claimant told the employer she was pregnant. The employer told the claimant it would tolerate absenteeism that had to do with sick children only. The claimant was absent due to her own medical issues on June 21, 26, and July 15, 2013. The claimant properly reported her absences. The employer terminated the claimant on July 15, 2013, for absenteeism.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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

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.

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.

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 July 15, 2013. 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 August 12, 2013, decision (reference 02) is reversed. 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