

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**WAYNE L BELT**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 10A-EUCU-00599-S2T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**TASMAN OMAHA**  
Employer

**OC: 09/13/09**  
**Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Tasman Omaha (employer) appealed a representative's July 6, 2010 decision (reference 05) that concluded Wayne Belt (claimant) was discharged and there was no evidence of willful or deliberate misconduct. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for August 26, 2010. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Jeff Hunter, General Manager, and Steve Hovey, Plant Manager.

**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 March 2, 2010, as a full-time maintenance worker. At the time he was hired the claimant told the employer he had a work injury from a previous employer. The employer told the claimant not to worry about it.

On May 7, 2010, a person that the claimant thought was a foreman told the claimant to pull hides. The claimant told the person that he would reinjure his back if he did it. The person told him to do it anyway. The claimant reinjured his back and told the person. The person told him to do light duty work. On May 14, 2010, the claimant saw his physician and the physician restricted the claimant from work. The claimant notified the employer of the injury. On May 14 and 16, 2010, the employer telephoned the claimant, told the claimant he could not have an employee missing for so long and said he was starting the paperwork to end the claimant's employment. The claimant assumed he was terminated.

**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 in May 2010. 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.

The claimant's and the employer's testimony is inconsistent. The administrative law judge finds the claimant's testimony to be more credible. The employer's testimony was contradictory because it had problems remembering dates and events.

**DECISION:**

The representative's July 6, 2010 decision (reference 05) is affirmed. The employer has not met its proof to establish job-related misconduct. Benefits are allowed.

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Beth A. Scheetz  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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