

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

CHRISTIAN M MERRITT
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 22A-UI-04465-JT-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

SMASH PARK DES MOINES LLC
Employer

OC: 01/09/22
Claimant: Respondent (2R)

Iowa Code Section 96.6-2 - Timeliness of Protest

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On February 9, 2022, the employer filed a timely appeal from the February 4, 2022 (reference 06) decision that allowed benefits to the claimant, provided he was otherwise eligible, and that held the employer's account could be charged for benefits, based on the determination that the employer's protest could not be considered because it was untimely.

After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call on March 23, 2022. Claimant, Christian Merritt, did not respond to the hearing notice instructions to register a telephone number for the hearing and did not participate. Donald Garrett represented the employer. Exhibits 1, 2 and 3 were received into evidence. The administrative law judge took official notice of the notice of claim/protest received and processed by Iowa Workforce Development.

ISSUE:

Whether the employer's protest of the claim for benefits was timely.
Whether there is good cause to deem the employer's late protest as timely.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds:

On January 19, 2022, Iowa Workforce Development mailed a notice of claim concerning the above claimant to the employer's West Des Moines address of record. The notice of claim contained a warning that any protest must be postmarked, faxed or returned by the due date set forth on the notice, which was January 31, 2022. The notice of claim form purposely did not provide an email address for Iowa Workforce Development. The notice of claim was received at the employer's address of record in a timely manner, prior to the deadline for protest. On the afternoon of January 31, 2022, the employer sent a bare-bones email to the main Benefits Bureau email address (uicclaimshelp@iwd.iowa.gov). The email simply said, "See attached." The employer had attached the completed protest on the notice of claim form. At some point, Customer Service at Iowa Workforce Development acknowledged the correspondence and indicated, "We have added the document to the file." The employer submitted a copy of the

correspondence, but the correspondence lacks a date or time for the IWD acknowledgment. The weight of the evidence indicates that IWD received the protest on January 31, 2022, albeit through a means not authorized by the notice of claim. IWD customer service erroneously date-stamped the notice of claim as received on February 1, 2022.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.6(2) provides, in pertinent part:

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.

Another portion of this same Code section dealing with timeliness of an appeal from a representative's decision states that such an appeal must be filed within ten days after notification of that decision was mailed. In addressing an issue of timeliness of an appeal under that portion of this Code section, the Iowa Supreme Court held that this statute prescribing the time for notice of appeal clearly limits the time to do so, and that compliance with the appeal notice provision is mandatory and jurisdictional. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979). The administrative law judge considers the reasoning and holding of the court to be controlling on this portion of that same Iowa Code section which deals with a time limit in which to file a protest after notification of the filing of the claim has been mailed.

Iowa Administrative Code Rule 871-24.8(2)(a) and (b) provide as follows:

- (2) Responding by employing units to a notice of the filing of an initial claim or a request for wage and separation information and protesting the payment of benefits.
 - a. The employing unit which receives a Form 65-5317, Notice of Claim, or a Form 68-0221, Request for Wage and Separation Information, must, within ten days of the date of the notice or request, submit to the department wage or separation information that affects the individual's rights to benefits, including any facts which disclose that the individual separated from employment voluntarily and without good cause attributable to the employer or was discharged for misconduct in connection with employment.
 - b. The employing unit may protest the payment of benefits if the protest is postmarked within ten days of the date of the notice of the filing of an initial claim. In the event that the tenth day falls on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday, the protest period is extended to the next working day of the department. If the employing unit has filed a timely report of facts that might adversely affect the individual's benefit rights, the report shall be considered as a protest to the payment of benefits.

Iowa Administrative Code Rule 871-24.35(1) provides:

Date of submission and extension of time for payments and notices.

- (1) Except as otherwise provided by statute or by division rule, any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document submitted to the division shall be considered received by and filed with the division:

- a. If transmitted via the United States Postal Service 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 is 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.
- b. If transmitted via the State Identification Data Exchange System (SIDES), maintained by the United States Department of Labor, on the date it was submitted to SIDES.
- c. If transmitted by any means other than those outlined in paragraphs 24.35(1)"a" and "b", on the date it is received by the division.

Iowa Administrative Code Rule 871-24.35(2) provides:

Date of submission and extension of time for payments and notices.

(2) The submission of any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the division that the delay in submission was due to division error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service.

- a. For submission that is not within the statutory or regulatory period to be considered timely, the interested party must submit a written explanation setting forth the circumstances of the delay.
- b. The division shall designate personnel who are to decide whether an extension of time shall be granted.
- c. No submission shall be considered timely if the delay in filing was unreasonable, as determined by the department after considering the circumstances in the case.
- d. If submission is not considered timely, although the interested party contends that the delay was due to division error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States postal service, the division shall issue an appealable decision to the interested party.

The employer filed a timely protest on January 31, 2022. The employer is encouraged to hereafter more closely adhere to the instructions on the notice of claim and either fax or mail the protest pursuant to those instructions, rather than email the protest to a generic claims email box. In light of the timely protest, this matter will be remanded to the Benefits Bureau for a fact-finding interview to address the May 20, 2021 separation the employer characterizes as a discharge for misconduct or for entry of a 10X weekly benefit amount requalification decision.

DECISION:

The February 4, 2022 (reference 06), decision is REVERSED. The employer's protest was timely. In light of the timely protest, this matter will be remanded to the Benefits Bureau for a fact-finding interview to address the May 20, 2021 separation the employer characterizes as a discharge for misconduct or for entry of a 10X weekly benefit amount requalification decision.

REMAND:

This matter is remanded to the Benefits Bureau for a fact-finding interview to address the May 20, 2021 separation the employer characterizes as a discharge for misconduct or for entry of a 10X weekly benefit amount requalification decision.



James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

March 31, 2022

Decision Dated and Mailed

jet/abd