

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

MICHAEL M SPEER
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 07A-UI-10975-H2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OMEGA CABINETS LTD
Employer

**OC: 10-28-07 R: 04
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge/Misconduct
871 IAC 24.32(7) – Excessive Unexcused Absenteeism

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed a timely appeal from the November 21, 2007, reference 01, decision that denied benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on December 12, 2007. The claimant did participate. The employer did participate through Chase Thornburg, Human Resources Manager and (representative) Courtney Aldridge, Human Resources Representative.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant discharged for work-related misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed the testimony and all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed as a woodworker, full-time, beginning September 11, 2006, through October 30, 2007, when he was discharged.

The claimant was discharged from employment due to a final incident of absenteeism that occurred on Sunday October 28, 2007, when the claimant called in absent to work because he could not find a ride into work. The claimant was last warned on October 3, 2007, that he faced termination from employment upon another incident of unexcused absenteeism. Prior absences occurred on October 8, and 12, 2006; January 18, 2007; February 25, 2007; September 10, 11, 2007 and September 13, 2007 (tardy). The claimant's final warning put him on notice that he could not accrue an attendance point again until after February 28, 2008. The claimant's absences for illness that were covered by a doctor's excuse or FMLA were not counted against him when the decision was made to discharge. The claimant was off work from September 18 through September 27, which was excused.

At hearing, the claimant indicated he had a doctor's note in his possession to cover an alleged hospitalization absence from September 10 through September 13. The claimant was given until Friday December 14 to fax in the medical excuse from the Oelwein local office, but he did not do so. The employer's records indicate that the claimant worked on September 12. The claimant's failure to present a medical note to cover September 10 and September 11 indicates those dates were not excused absences.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related 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(7) provides:

(7) Excessive unexcused absenteeism. Excessive unexcused absenteeism is an intentional disregard of the duty owed by the claimant to the employer and shall be considered misconduct except for illness or other reasonable grounds for which the employee was absent and that were properly reported to the employer.

The determination of whether unexcused absenteeism is excessive necessarily requires consideration of past acts and warnings. The term "absenteeism" also encompasses conduct that is more accurately referred to as "tardiness." An absence is an extended tardiness, and an incident of tardiness is a limited absence. Absences related to issues of personal responsibility such as transportation, lack of childcare, and oversleeping are not considered excused. *Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984).

An employer is entitled to expect its employees to report to work as scheduled or to be notified when and why the employee is unable to report to work. The employer has established that the claimant was warned that further unexcused absences could result in termination of employment and the final absence was not excused. The final absence, in combination with the claimant's history of unexcused absenteeism, is considered excessive. Benefits are withheld.

DECISION:

The November 21, 2007, reference 01, decision is affirmed. The claimant was discharged from employment due to excessive, unexcused absenteeism. Benefits are withheld until such time as he has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible.

Teresa K. Hillary
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

tkh/kjw