

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

**CHRISTOPHER PROFFITT**  
Claimant

**ADVANCE STORES COMPANY INC**  
Employer

**APPEAL 22A-UI-16206-JD-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 07/17/22  
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(1)a – Discharge for Misconduct  
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 – Emp./Representative Participation in Fact-Finding Interview

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

On August 18, 2022, the employer filed an appeal from the August 10, 2022, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that allowed benefits based on a determination that the claimant was discharged from his employment for no disqualifying reason. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on September 14, 2022. Claimant Christopher Proffitt, did not participate. Employer participated through Amelia Gallagher, Equifax Representative and Audrey Haisley, Human Resources Generalist. Employer's Exhibit 1 was admitted. Official notice was taken of the administrative record.

**ISSUES:**

Was the claimant discharged from employment for disqualifying job related misconduct?  
Whether claimant was overpaid benefits.  
Whether claimant should repay those benefits and/or whether employer should be charged based upon its participation in the fact-finding interview.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant began working for employer on July 25, 2021. Claimant last worked as a full-time retail parts manager. Claimant was separated from employment on July 1, 2022, when he was discharged for refusing to submit to a drug test in violation of employer policy. (Emp. Ex. 1). The employer discovered a drug pipe in the store safe on the morning of July 1, 2022. The claimant was the closing supervisor the night before. Based on this one fact, the employer required the claimant to submit to a drug test. The drug test was not scheduled until July 5, 2022, a violation of the company's own drug policy which requires testing of associates for controlled substances within twenty-four hours of the event that precipitated the request for testing. The employer's witness was unable to testify as to how the claimant was notified that he was required to submit to testing or to what substances would be tested for. Additionally, the employer's witness was unsure if anyone discussed the presence of the pipe in the safe or the circumstances surrounding its placement there. The

employer provided no first hand witness that could testify as to any of the details surrounding the discovery of the pipe in the safe and any subsequent interactions with the claimant.

The employer does have a written drug policy. See Exhibit 1. The policy states: A refusal to consent to a drug screen as well as any positive drug screen will result in termination". See *Id.*

The administrative record reflects that claimant has neither filed for nor received unemployment insurance benefits, since filing his original claim on July 17, 2022. Employer submitted documents prior to the fact-finding interview but was never contacted by a representative from Iowa Workforce Development for any additional information or rebuttal.

### **REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

The administrative law judge concludes that the claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason.

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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871 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.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The issue is not whether the employer made

a correct decision in separating claimant, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). Misconduct must be "substantial" to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. *Newman v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984).

What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what misconduct warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. *Pierce v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988). A determination as to whether an employee's act is misconduct does not rest solely on the interpretation or application of the employer's policy or rule. A violation is not necessarily disqualifying misconduct even if the employer was fully within its rights to impose discipline up to or including discharge for the incident under its policy.

Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. Such misconduct must be "substantial." *Newman v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). The focus of the administrative code definition of misconduct is on deliberate, intentional or culpable acts by the employee. *Id.* When based on carelessness, the carelessness must actually indicate a "wrongful intent" to be disqualifying in nature. *Id.* Negligence does not constitute misconduct unless recurrent in nature; a single act is not disqualifying unless indicative of a deliberate disregard of the employer's interests. *Henry v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 391 N.W.2d 731 (Iowa Ct. App. 1986).

When an employee is discharged due to their failure to pass or refusal to submit to drug testing, the employer must comply with Iowa Code § 730.5. If an employer chooses to conduct alcohol or drug testing, it must substantially comply with all the requirements of this statute. If an employer has an alcohol or drug testing policy, it must be in writing. Iowa Code § 730.5(9)(a)(1). The policy must have been provided to every employee subject to testing and must be available for review by employees and prospective employees. Iowa Code § 730.5(9)(a)(1).

The employer requested that the claimant submit to a drug test based on the reasonable suspicion prong of Iowa Code §730.5.

#### Iowa Code §730.5(8) – Drug or Alcohol Testing

##### 8. Drug or alcohol testing.

Employers may conduct drug or alcohol testing as provided in this subsection: a. Employers may conduct unannounced drug or alcohol testing of employees who are selected from any of the following pools of employees:

(1) The entire employee population at a particular work site of the employer except for employees not subject to testing pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement, or employees who are not scheduled to be at work at the time the testing is conducted because of the status of the employees or who have been excused from work pursuant to the employer's work policy prior to the time the testing is announced to employees.

(2) The entire full-time active employee population at a particular work site except for employees not subject to testing pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement, or employees who are not scheduled to be at work at the time the testing is to be conducted because of the status of the employee or who have been excused from work pursuant to the employer's working policy.

(3) All employees at a particular work site who are in a pool of employees in a safety-sensitive position and who are scheduled to be at work at the time testing is conducted, other than employees not subject to testing pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement, or employees who are not scheduled to be at work at the time the testing is to be conducted or who have been excused from work pursuant to the employer's work policy prior to the time the testing is announced to employees.

b. Employers may conduct drug or alcohol testing of employees during, and after completion of, drug or alcohol rehabilitation.

c. Employers may conduct reasonable suspicion drug or alcohol testing.

d. Employers may conduct drug or alcohol testing of prospective employees.

e. Employers may conduct drug or alcohol testing as required by federal law or regulation or by law enforcement

#### Iowa Code § 730.5(1)(i) – Definitions – Reasonable Suspicion

i. "Reasonable suspicion drug or alcohol testing "means drug or alcohol testing based upon evidence that an employee is using or has used alcohol or other drugs in violation of the employer's written policy drawn from specific objective and articulable facts and reasonable inferences drawn from those facts in light of experience. For purposes of this paragraph, facts and inferences may be based upon, but not limited to, any of the following:

(1) Observable phenomena while at work such as direct observation of alcohol or drug use or abuse or of the physical symptoms or manifestations of being impaired due to alcohol or other drug use.

(2) Abnormal conduct or erratic behavior while at work or a significant deterioration in work performance.

(3) A report of alcohol or other drug use provided by a reliable and credible source.

(4) Evidence that an individual has tampered with any drug or alcohol test during the individual's employment with the current employer.

(5) Evidence that an employee has caused an accident while at work which resulted in an injury to a person for which injury, if suffered by an employee, a record or report could be required under chapter 88, or resulted in damage to property, including to equipment, in an amount reasonably estimated at the time of the accident to exceed one thousand dollars.

(6) Evidence that an employee has manufactured, sold, distributed, solicited, possessed, used, or transferred drugs while working or while on the employer's premises or while operating the employer's vehicle, machinery, or equipment.

The employer failed to meet its initial burden of satisfying the "reasonable suspicion" requirement of this statute. The employer's lack of any first hand witness that could provide further information regarding an alleged drug pipe found in the store safe does not, by itself, meet this requirement.

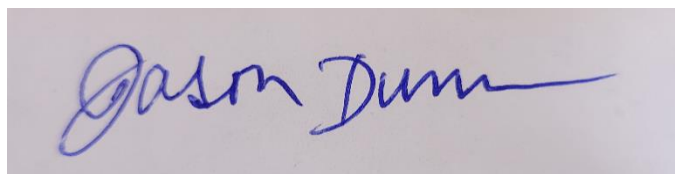
The employer failed to provide any collateral information regarding the discovery of the pipe nor any conversations with the claimant that would satisfy this burden. Additionally, the employer failed to provide credible evidence of the claimant's receipt of the employer's drug policy or how the employer communicated with the claimant that he was required to submit to a drug test.

In *Eaton v. Employment Appeal Bd.*, the Iowa Supreme Court found, "[it] would be contrary to the spirit of chapter 730 to allow an employer to benefit from an unauthorized drug test by relying on it as a basis to disqualify an employee from unemployment compensation benefits." 602 N.W.2d 553, 558 (Iowa 1999).

The employer failed to substantially comply with the requirements of Iowa Code §730.5 and the claimant is not disqualified to receiving benefits. Benefits are allowed provided the claimant remains otherwise eligible. Because claimant's separation was not disqualifying, the issues of overpayment, repayment and chargeability are moot.

**DECISION:**

The August 10, 2022, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. Claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided he is otherwise eligible. Any benefits claimed and withheld on this basis shall be paid.



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Jason Dunn  
Administrative Law Judge

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October 11, 2022  
Decision Dated and Mailed

r/s

**APPEAL RIGHTS.** If you disagree with the decision, you or any interested party may:

1. Appeal to the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days of the date under the judge's signature by submitting a written appeal via mail, fax, or online to:

**Employment Appeal Board  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor – Lucas Building  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
Fax: (515)281-7191  
Online: [eab.iowa.gov](http://eab.iowa.gov)**

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday.

**AN APPEAL TO THE BOARD SHALL STATE CLEARLY:**

- 1) The name, address, and social security number of the claimant.
- 2) A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
- 3) That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
- 4) The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

An Employment Appeal Board decision is final agency action. If a party disagrees with the Employment Appeal Board decision, they may then file a petition for judicial review in district court.

2. If no one files an appeal of the judge's decision with the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days, the decision becomes final agency action, and you have the option to file a petition for judicial review in District Court within thirty (30) days after the decision becomes final. Additional information on how to file a petition can be found at Iowa Code §17A.19, which is online at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf> or by contacting the District Court Clerk of Court <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-directory/>.

**Note to Parties:** YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in the appeal or obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds.

**Note to Claimant:** It is important that you file your weekly claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

**SERVICE INFORMATION:**

A true and correct copy of this decision was mailed to each of the parties listed.

**DERECHOS DE APELACIÓN.** Si no está de acuerdo con la decisión, usted o cualquier parte interesada puede:

1. Apelar a la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días de la fecha bajo la firma del juez presentando una apelación por escrito por correo, fax o en línea a:

**Employment Appeal Board  
4th Floor – Lucas Building  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
Fax: (515)281-7191  
En línea: eab.iowa.gov**

El período de apelación se extenderá hasta el siguiente día hábil si el último día para apelar cae en fin de semana o día feriado legal.

**UNA APELACIÓN A LA JUNTA DEBE ESTABLECER CLARAMENTE:**

- 1) El nombre, dirección y número de seguro social del reclamante.
- 2) Una referencia a la decisión de la que se toma la apelación.
- 3) Que se interponga recurso de apelación contra tal decisión y se firme dicho recurso.
- 4) Los fundamentos en que se funda dicho recurso.

Una decisión de la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo es una acción final de la agencia. Si una de las partes no está de acuerdo con la decisión de la Junta de Apelación de Empleo, puede presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el tribunal de distrito.

2. Si nadie presenta una apelación de la decisión del juez ante la Junta de Apelaciones Laborales dentro de los quince (15) días, la decisión se convierte en acción final de la agencia y usted tiene la opción de presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el Tribunal de Distrito dentro de los treinta (30) días después de que la decisión adquiera firmeza. Puede encontrar información adicional sobre cómo presentar una petición en el Código de Iowa §17A.19, que se encuentra en línea en <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf> o comunicándose con el Tribunal de Distrito Secretario del tribunal <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-directory/>.

**Nota para las partes:** USTED PUEDE REPRESENTARSE en la apelación u obtener un abogado u otra parte interesada para que lo haga, siempre que no haya gastos para Workforce Development. Si desea ser representado por un abogado, puede obtener los servicios de un abogado privado o uno cuyos servicios se paguen con fondos públicos.

**Nota para el reclamante:** es importante que presente su reclamo semanal según las instrucciones, mientras esta apelación está pendiente, para proteger su derecho continuo a los beneficios.

**SERVICIO DE INFORMACIÓN:**

Se envió por correo una copia fiel y correcta de esta decisión a cada una de las partes enumeradas.