

IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Section
1000 East Grand—Des Moines, Iowa 50319
DECISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
68-0157 (7-97) – 3091078 - EI

SHERMAN Y SWANK
5854 HWY F48W
NEWTON IA 50208

SCHNEIDER NATIONAL CARRIERS INC
c/o ADP-UC EXPRESS
PO BOX 66744
ST LOUIS MO 63166-6744

Appeal Number: 06A-UI-06080-SWT
OC: 04/30/06 R: 02
Claimant: Respondent (1)

This Decision Shall Become Final, unless within fifteen (15) days from the date below, you or any interested party appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by submitting either a signed letter or a signed written Notice of Appeal, directly to the **Employment Appeal Board, 4th Floor—Lucas Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.**

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.

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.

YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in this appeal or you may 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. It is important that you file your claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

(Administrative Law Judge)

(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96.5-2-a - Discharge

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated June 2, 2006, reference 04, that concluded the claimant's discharge was not for work-connected misconduct. A telephone hearing was held on July 3, 2006. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. The claimant participated in the hearing. Ted Bentley participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer with a witness, Lauren Knous.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The claimant worked full time for the employer as an over-the-road truck driver from May 6, 2005, to May 2, 2006. On January 10, 2006, a car pulled alongside the claimant on an exit as he was making a left turn and the truck trailer scraped the car. Because of this and complaints the employer had received about the claimant's driving, the employer placed the claimant on a

performance improvement plan on January 12, 2006, requiring him to have no further accidents for six months.

On April 15, 2006, the claimant was traveling at a slow rate of speed in heavy traffic in California. Vehicles were weaving in and out of traffic. One vehicle veered in front of the car the claimant was following, which caused the car to have to brake suddenly. The car in front of the claimant rear-ended the vehicle. The claimant had kept a safe following distance and immediately applied the brakes but could not avoid hitting the car in the rear. The claimant was not cited in the accident.

After the accident, the claimant was brought in for remedial driver's training on May 2, 2006. The claimant performed the training to the best of his ability, but the trainer criticized him for deficiencies in hooking up the trailer, not moving over to the middle lane of the interstate soon enough to go around a person on the right shoulder of the interstate, and driving too fast even though he was under the speed limit.

The employer discharged the claimant on May 2, 2006, for his accident record and performance on the remedial training.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue in this case is whether the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law.

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.

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 to prove the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The propriety of a discharge is not at issue in an unemployment insurance case. An employer may be justified in discharging an employee, but the employee's conduct may not amount to misconduct precluding the payment of unemployment compensation. The law limits disqualifying misconduct to substantial and willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661, 665 (Iowa 2000).

While the employer may have been justified in discharging the claimant, work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law has not been established. The final accident was not due to willful or even negligent conduct and the claimant's performance in the remedial training amounts to, at most, unsatisfactory work performance not work-connected misconduct.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated June 2, 2006, reference 04, is affirmed. The claimant is qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits, if he is otherwise eligible.

saw/kkf