

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

YERANY LEYVA

Claimant

HORMEL FOODS CORPORATION

Employer

APPEAL NO. 20A-UI-13278-B2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 06/23/19

Claimant: Appellant (2)

Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated October 22, 2020, reference 02, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on December 18, 2020. Claimant participated personally. Employer failed to respond to the hearing notice and did not participate. Claimant's Exhibit A was admitted into evidence.

ISSUE:

Whether claimant was discharged for misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for employer on June 3, 2020. Employer discharged claimant on June 4, 2020 because claimant was unable to do all of the work required of his because of restrictions which the employer knew of at the time of hire.

Claimant was hired by employer on September 23, 2019. On the application claimant listed medical problems that restricted him to lifting items under 50 pounds. Claimant also spoke of this restriction during a medical exam at the time of hire.

Claimant worked as a laborer for employer switching from job to job. Employer did attempt to keep claimant in places that were within his restrictions. Claimant did not complain when asked to do other tasks. Claimant received no warnings for not doing jobs appropriately.

On June 4, 2020 claimant was called into the human resources department and told he was being let go as employer did not have any jobs that claimant could do with his work restrictions.

At all times claimant remained able and available to work.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.5(2)a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits, regardless of the source of the individual's wage credits:

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 disqualification shall continue 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 Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work connected misconduct. Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has the burden to establish the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982), Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a.

The employer bears the burden of proving that a claimant is disqualified from receiving benefits because of substantial misconduct within the meaning of Iowa Code section 96.5(2). *Myers*, 462 N.W.2d at 737. 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. Because our unemployment compensation law is designed to protect workers from financial hardships when they become unemployed through no fault of their own, we construe the provisions "liberally to carry out its humane and beneficial purpose." *Bridgestone/Firestone, Inc. v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 570 N.W.2d 85, 96 (Iowa 1997). "[C]ode provisions which operate to work

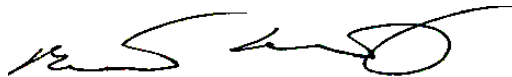
a forfeiture of benefits are strongly construed in favor of the claimant." *Diggs v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 478 N.W.2d 432, 434 (Iowa Ct. App. 1991).

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. The lack of a current warning may detract from a finding of an intentional policy violation. In this matter, the evidence fails to establish that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning people who are unable to do tasks. Claimant was not warned concerning this policy.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, fails to constitute misconduct because claimant alerted employer in advance of employment of his condition and restrictions and was hired. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was not discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is not disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated October 22, 2020, reference 02, is reversed. Claimant is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits, provided claimant meets all other eligibility requirements.



Blair A. Bennett
Administrative Law Judge

December 31, 2020
Decision Dated and Mailed

bab/scn