

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

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**CHRISTINA L TRISKA**

Claimant

**APPEAL 15A-UI-13234-DL-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**CARGILL MEAT SOLUTIONS CORP**

Employer

**OC: 10/25/15**

**Claimant: Appellant (2)**

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Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The claimant filed an appeal from the November 19, 2015, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based upon a discharge from employment. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on December 17, 2015. Claimant participated. Employer Cargill Meat Solutions n/k/a JBS USA participated through human resources representative, Martha Gutierrez.

**ISSUE:**

Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed full-time as a production worker for Cargill Meat Solutions n/k/a JBS USA from December 1, 1997, and was separated from employment on October 26, 2015, when she was discharged. She did not alter the medical note as accused. The employer did not have information to present or refer to because of the business transition even though both are represented by the agent of record Talx/Equifax.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason.

When the record is composed solely of hearsay evidence, that evidence must be examined closely in light of the entire record. *Schmitz v. Iowa Dep't Human Servs.*, 461 N.W.2d 603, 607 (Iowa Ct. App. 1990). Both the quality and the quantity of the evidence must be evaluated to see whether it rises to the necessary levels of trustworthiness, credibility, and accuracy required by a reasonably prudent person in the conduct of serious affairs. See, Iowa Code § 17A.14 (1). In making the evaluation, the fact-finder should conduct a common sense evaluation of (1) the nature of the hearsay; (2) the availability of better evidence; (3) the cost of acquiring better information; (4) the need for precision; and (5) the administrative policy to be fulfilled. *Schmitz*,

461 N.W.2d at 608. The Iowa Supreme Court has ruled that if a party has the power to produce more explicit and direct evidence than it chooses to present, the administrative law judge may infer that evidence not presented would reveal deficiencies in the party's case. *Crosser v. Iowa Dep't of Pub. Safety*, 240 N.W.2d 682 (Iowa 1976).

The decision in this case rests, at least in part, upon the credibility of the parties. The employer alleges she altered a medical note by writing over a date in an attempt to avoid a ninth attendance point. The employer did not present a copy of the original note or the altered note and did not present any witness with direct knowledge of the issue or anyone who is said to have spoken to the doctor's office. Given the serious nature of the proceeding and the employer's allegations resulting in claimant's discharge from employment, the employer's complete reliance on hearsay statements is unsettling.

Mindful of the ruling in *Crosser, id.*, and noting that the claimant presented direct, first-hand testimony while the employer relied upon second-hand reports, the administrative law judge concludes that the claimant's recollection of the events is more credible than that of the employer.

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

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(4) provides:

(4) Report required. The claimant's statement and the employer's statement must give detailed facts as to the specific reason for the claimant's discharge. Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. In cases where a suspension or disciplinary layoff exists, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct shall be resolved.

In an at-will employment environment an employer may discharge an employee for any number of reasons or no reason at all if it is not contrary to public policy, but if it fails to meet its burden of proof to establish job related misconduct as the reason for the separation, it incurs potential liability for unemployment insurance benefits related to that separation.

The employer has not met the burden of proof to establish that claimant acted deliberately or with recurrent negligence in violation of company policy, procedure, or prior warning. An employee is entitled to fair warning that the employer will no longer tolerate certain performance and conduct. Without fair warning, an employee has no reasonable way of knowing that there are changes that need be made in order to preserve the employment. If an employer expects an employee to conform to certain expectations or face discharge, appropriate (preferably written), detailed, and reasonable notice should be given.

**DECISION:**

The November 19, 2015, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. Claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided she is otherwise eligible. Any benefits claimed and withheld on this basis shall be paid.

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Dévon M. Lewis  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

dml/pjs

**NOTE TO EMPLOYER:**

If you wish to change the business name of record, please access your account at: <https://www.myiowaui.org/UITIPTaxWeb/>.

Helpful information about using this site may be found at:

<http://www.iowaworkforce.org/ui/uiemployers.htm> and

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_mpCM8FGQoY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mpCM8FGQoY)