

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

CHRISTOPHER A THOMAS
Claimant

HEARTLAND EXPRESS INC OF IOWA
Employer

APPEAL 20A-UI-09256-DG-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 05/10/20
Claimant: Appellant (1)

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated July 22, 2020, (reference 02) that held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on September 21, 2020. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Lea Peters, Human Resources Generalist. Employer's Exhibit 1 and Claimant's Exhibit A were admitted into evidence.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related 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 5, 2020. Employer discharged claimant on June 29, 2020, because claimant's driver's license was suspended after being charged with driving while intoxicated.

Claimant began working for employer as full-time over the road truck driver in April, 2011. On or about May 20, 2020 claimant was charged with driving while intoxicated while driving his personal vehicle. Claimant refused to submit to a breathalyzer test, and his license was suspended for failure to submit to the test.

Claimant received a copy of employer's handbook which requires all driver's to maintain a valid unencumbered driver's license at all times. Claimant was placed on an administrative leave of absence on June 5, 2020. Employer decided to terminate claimant's employment on June 29, 2020 when it learned that claimant's driver's license would be suspended indefinitely.

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.

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 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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(8) provides:

(8) *Past acts of misconduct.* While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

Repeated traffic violations rendering a claimant uninsurable can constitute job misconduct even if the traffic citations were received on the claimant's own time and in his own vehicle. *Cook v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 299 N.W.2d 698 (Iowa 1980).

The employer is not obligated to accommodate an employee during a license suspension or revocation period but does have a legal obligation to abide by state and federal transportation

safety statutes and regulations and not allow unlicensed individuals to drive. While the license revocation issue was not related to his work, claimant's failure to maintain a valid, unrestricted driver's license as a known condition of the employment was misconduct sufficient to warrant a denial of benefits.

DECISION:

The July 22, 2020, (reference 02) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. The claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct. 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.



Duane L. Golden
Administrative Law Judge

September 23, 2020
Decision Dated and Mailed

dlg/scn