

**IN THE IOWA ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

STANLEY J CANOVA
Claimant

DEE ZEE INC
Employer

APPEAL 23A-UI-06834-DS-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 05/28/23
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32 – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On July 8, 2023, the claimant filed an appeal from the unemployment insurance decision dated June 29, 2023, (Reference 02) that denied benefits. Notice of hearing was mailed to the parties' last known addresses of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 9:00 a.m. on July 27, 2023. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated through Lynn Lacy-Slugg, Human Resources Assistant. Claimant's Exhibits 1-3 were admitted to the record. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative record.

ISSUES:

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:

The claimant worked for this employer as a Die Shop Technician from December 3, 2018, until May 1, 2023, when he was discharged by the employer. He reported to Jimmy Johnson. His last day of work was April 26, 2023. The claimant did not report for work on April 27, 2023, April 28, 2023, and May 1, 2023, because he was incarcerated at the time. The employer was aware of the possibility that the claimant would be incarcerated for Operating While Intoxicated sometime in March of 2023, and therefore the claimant was granted a leave of absence from March 20, 2023, until April 19, 2023. After the claimant did not report for work without notification on April 27, 2023, and April 28, 2023, the claimant's wife contacted the employer by text message to advise that the claimant had been jailed and that his lawyers believed it was for only two days. However, she also advised that the claimant's "paperwork" said thirty days and that the lawyers had contacted the judge regarding this situation. (Claimant's Exhibit 1) The claimant then did not report for work on Monday, May 1, 2023, and no notification or excuse was provided to the employer. As the claimant had then missed three consecutive days of work without proper excuse or notification, the employer discharged the claimant from the employment on May 1, 2023.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from the employment due to disqualifying incarceration. Benefits are denied.

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)(a) and (d) provide:

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.

d. For the purposes of this subsection, "misconduct" means a deliberate act or omission by an employee that constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of the employee's contract of employment. Misconduct is 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 even 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. Misconduct by an individual includes but is not limited to all of the following:

...

(7) Incarceration for an act for which one could reasonably expect to be incarcerated that results in missing work.

...

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.

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). 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).

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). 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).

It is the duty of the administrative law judge, as the trier of fact, to determine the credibility of witnesses, weigh the evidence and decide the facts in issue. *Arndt v. City of LeClaire*, 728 N.W.2d 389, 394-395 (Iowa 2007).

The administrative law judge may believe all, part or none of any witness's testimony. *State v. Holtz*, 548 N.W.2d 162, 163 (Iowa App. 1996). In assessing the credibility of witnesses, the administrative law judge should consider the evidence using his or her own observations, common sense and experience. *Id.* In determining the facts, and deciding what testimony to believe, the fact finder may consider the following factors: whether the testimony is reasonable and consistent with other evidence you believe; whether a witness has made inconsistent statements; the witness's appearance, conduct, age, intelligence, memory and knowledge of the facts; and the witness's interest in the trial, their motive, candor, bias and prejudice. *Id.*

Iowa Code section 96.5(11) provides:

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

11. Incarceration--disqualified.

- a. If the department finds that the individual became separated from employment due to the individual's incarceration in a jail, municipal holding facility, or correctional institution or facility, unless the department finds all of the following:
 - (1) The individual notified the employer that the individual would be absent from work due to the individual's incarceration prior to any such absence.
 - (2) Criminal charges relating to the incarceration were not filed against the individual, all criminal charges against the individual relating to the incarceration were dismissed, or the individual was found not guilty of all criminal charges relating to the incarceration
 - (3) The individual reported back to the employer within two work days of the individual's release from incarceration and offered services.
 - (4) The employer rejected the individual's offer of services.

- b. A disqualification under this subsection 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.

In the case, the claimant was incarcerated because he engaged in an act for which he could reasonably expect to be incarcerated and miss work. Further, the claimant did not notify the employer in advance that he would be incarcerated specifically beginning April 27, 2023. Rather, the claimant simply did not appear for work that day or the next day, and after two days of unexcused absence, the claimant's wife contacted the employer. Even then, it was not made clear to the employer that the claimant would continue to miss work. The claimant simply did not appear for work again and no notification of any kind was provided to the employer on May 1, 2023. The claimant has not established that he properly notified the employer of his incarceration or that his charges were disposed of consistent with the second element of the law. Benefits are denied.

DECISION:

The June 29, 2023, (Reference 02) unemployment insurance decision denying benefits is **AFFIRMED**. The claimant was discharged due to disqualifying incarceration. Benefits are withheld until the claimant has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the individual's weekly benefit amount, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.



David J. Steen
Administrative Law Judge
Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals and Licensing
Administrative Hearings Division - UI Appeals Bureau

08/03/23
Decision Dated and Mailed

DJS/jkb

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
4th Floor – Lucas Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Fax: (515)281-7191
Online: 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. *There is no filing fee to file an appeal with the Employment Appeal Board.*

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 file a petition for judicial review in district court.

2. If you do not file 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 www.iowacourts.gov/efile. *There may be a filing fee to file the petition in District Court.*

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. *No hay tarifa de presentación para presentar una apelación ante la Junta de Apelación de Empleo.*

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 no presenta una apelación de la decisión del juez ante la Junta de Apelación de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días, la decisión se convierte en una acción final de la agencia y tiene la opción de presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el Tribunal de Distrito dentro de los treinta (30) días. Puede encontrar información adicional sobre cómo presentar una petición en www.iowacourts.gov/efile. *Puede haber una tarifa de presentación para presentar la petición en el Tribunal de Distrito.*

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.