

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

68-0157 (9-06) - 3091078 - EI

**RANDALL E SMITH**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO: 14A-UI-01003-HT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**PANAMA TRANSFER INC**  
Employer

**OC: 05/05/13**  
**Claimant: Appellant (6)**

Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision  
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

An appeal was filed from a representative's unemployment insurance decision dated January 24, 2014 (reference 02) that concluded the claimant was disqualified for unemployment insurance benefits after a separation from employment from Panama Transfer. Notices of hearing were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 2:00 p.m. on February 18, 2014.

A review of the Appeals Bureau's conference call system indicates that the claimant/appellant failed to respond to the hearing notice and provide a telephone number at which he could be reached for the hearing. Based upon the appellant's failure to participate in the hearing and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law and decision.

**ISSUE:**

Should the appeal be dismissed based upon the claimant/appellant not participating in the hearing?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The parties were properly notified of the scheduled hearing on this appeal. The claimant/appellant failed to provide a telephone number at which the appellant could be reached for the hearing and did not participate in the hearing or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice.

The representative's decision had concluded that the claimant/appellant was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

The record was closed at 2:15 p.m. At 2:35 p.m. the claimant/appellant called and requested to participate. The appellant received the hearing notice prior to the February 18, 2014 hearing. The instructions inform the parties that if the party does not contact the Appeals Section and provide the phone number at which the party can be contacted for the hearing, the party will not

be called for the hearing. The first time the appellant directly contacted the Appeals Section was on February 18, 2014, after the scheduled start time for the hearing. The appellant had not read all the information on the hearing notice, and had assumed that the Appeals Section would initiate the telephone contact even without a response to the hearing notice.

#### **REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

The Iowa Administrative Procedures Act at Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) provides in pertinent part:

If a party fails to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding after proper service of notice, the presiding officer may, if no adjournment is granted, enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party. ... If a decision is rendered against a party who failed to appear for the hearing and the presiding officer is timely requested by that party to vacate the decision for good cause, the time for initiating a further appeal is stayed pending a determination by the presiding officer to grant or deny the request. If adequate reasons are provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall vacate the decision and, after proper service of notice, conduct another evidentiary hearing. If adequate reasons are not provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall deny the motion to vacate.

The Agency rules at Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) provide:

If a party has not responded to a notice of telephone hearing by providing the appeals bureau with the names and telephone numbers of the persons who are participating in the hearing by the scheduled starting time of the hearing or is not available at the telephone number provided, the presiding officer may proceed with the hearing. If the appealing party fails to provide a telephone number or is unavailable for the hearing, the presiding officer may decide the appealing party is in default and dismiss the appeal as provided in Iowa Code section 17A.12(3). The record may be reopened if the absent party makes a request to reopen the hearing under subrule 26.8(3) and shows good cause for reopening the hearing.

- a. If an absent party responds to the hearing notice while the hearing is in progress, the presiding officer shall pause to admit the party, summarize the hearing to that point, administer the oath, and resume the hearing.
- b. If a party responds to the notice of hearing after the record has been closed and any party which has participated is no longer on the telephone line, the presiding officer shall not take the evidence of the late party. Instead, the presiding officer shall inquire ex parte as to why the party was late in responding to the notice of hearing. For good cause shown, the presiding officer shall reopen the record and cause further notice of hearing to be issued to all parties of record. The record shall not be reopened if the presiding officer does not find good cause for the party's late response to the notice of hearing.
- c. Failure to read or follow the instructions on the notice of hearing shall not constitute good cause for reopening the record.

The claimant/appellant appealed the representative's decision but failed to participate in the hearing. The claimant/appellant has therefore defaulted on his appeal pursuant to Iowa

Code §17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.14(7), and the representative's decision remains in force and effect.

871 IAC 26.14(7) provides:

(7) If a party has not responded to a notice of telephone hearing by providing the appeals section with the names and telephone numbers of its witnesses by the scheduled time of the hearing, the presiding officer may proceed with the hearing.

a. If an absent party responds to the hearing notice while the hearing is in progress, the presiding officer shall pause to admit the party, summarize the hearing to that point, administer the oath, and resume the hearing.

b. If a party responds to the notice of hearing after the record has been closed and any party which has participated is no longer on the telephone line, the presiding officer shall not take the evidence of the late party. Instead, the presiding officer shall inquire as to why the party was late in responding to the notice of hearing. For good cause shown, the presiding officer shall reopen the record and cause further notice of hearing to be issued to all parties of record. The record shall not be reopened if the presiding officer does not find good cause for the party's late response to the notice of hearing.

c. Failure to read or follow the instructions on the notice of hearing shall not constitute good cause for reopening the record.

The first time the appellant called the Appeals Section for the February 18, 2014 hearing was after the hearing had been closed. Although the appellant may have intended to participate in the hearing, he failed to read or follow the hearing notice instructions and did not contact the Appeals Section as directed prior to the hearing. The rule specifically states that failure to read or follow the instructions on the hearing notice does not constitute good cause to reopen the hearing. The appellant did not establish good cause to reopen the hearing. Therefore, the appellant's request to reopen the hearing is denied.

**DECISION:**

The representative's unemployment insurance decision dated January 24, 2014, reference 02, is affirmed. The decision denying benefits remains in effect.

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Bonny G. Hendricksmeier  
Administrative Law Judge  
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau  
Iowa Workforce Development  
1000 East Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209  
Fax 515-242-5144

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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