

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

JOEL A REESE
Claimant

WEST ASSET MANAGEMENT INC
Employer

APPEAL NO: 16A-UI-09622-JCT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**OC: 07/31/16
Claimant: Respondent (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 by the employer from an unemployment insurance decision dated August 26, 2016, (reference 02) that allowed benefits based upon the claimant's separation. Notice of the hearing was mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 8:00 a.m. on September 21, 2016. A review of the Appeals Bureau's conference call system after 8:15 a.m. the same day shows the employer/appellant failed to respond to the hearing notice instruction and provide a telephone number at which it could be reached for the scheduled hearing, and no hearing was held.

ISSUE:

Should the appeal be dismissed based upon the appellant not being available to participate in the scheduled hearing?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The party was properly notified of the scheduled hearing on this appeal. The appellant, West Asset Management Inc., failed to respond to the hearing notice instruction and provide a telephone number at which it could be reached, nor did it request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice.

The hearing notice instruction specifically advised parties:

Date: WED SEP 21, 2016
Iowa Time: 8:00 a.m.

You must register for the hearing immediately!

You must register your phone number and the name(s) and phone number(s) of any witness(es) with the Appeals Bureau. If you do not register, the judge will not be able to call you or your witness(es) for the hearing.

The agency's decision concluded that the claimant was allowed unemployment insurance benefits.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The Iowa Administrative Procedure Act at Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) provides that if a party fails to appear or participate in a hearing after proper service of notice, the judge may enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party. The statute further states that if a party makes a timely request to vacate the decision and shows good cause for failing to appear, the judge shall vacate the decision and conduct another hearing.

Agency rule Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) provides that if the appealing 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 judge may decide the appealing party is in default and dismiss the appeal as provided in Iowa Code § 17A.12(3). The record may be reopened if the absent party makes a request to reopen the hearing and shows good cause for reopening the hearing. The rule further states that *failure to read or follow the instructions on the notice of hearing is not good cause for reopening the record*. Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7)c. (Emphasis added.)

The appellant, West Asset Management Inc., appealed the unemployment insurance decision but failed to be available to participate in the scheduled hearing. The appellant has therefore defaulted on its appeal pursuant to Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.14(7), and the decision remains in force and effect.

If the appellant disagrees with this decision, a request to reopen the record must be made to the administrative law judge within 15 days after the mailing date of this decision. The request should be mailed to the administrative law judge at the address listed at the end of this decision and must explain the emergency or other good cause that prevented the appellant from participating in the hearing at the scheduled time.

DECISION:

The appellant/employer is in default and the appeal is dismissed. The unemployment insurance decision dated August 26, 2016, (reference 02) allowing benefits remains in effect.

Jennifer L. Beckman
Administrative Law Judge
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau
Iowa Workforce Development
1000 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209
Fax 515-478-3528

Decision Dated and Mailed

jlb/pjs