

IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Section  
1000 East Grand—Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
DECISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
68-0157 (7-97) – 3091078 - EI

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TYSON FRESH MEATS INC  
C/O TALX – UC EXPRESS  
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ST LOUIS MO 63166-0283

Appeal Number: 05A-UI-07620-SWT  
OC: 06/19/05 R: 01  
Claimant: Respondent (2)

**This Decision Shall Become Final**, unless within fifteen (15) days from the date below, you or any interested party appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by submitting either a signed letter or a signed written Notice of Appeal, directly to the **Employment Appeal Board, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor—Lucas Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319**.

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.

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.

YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in this appeal or you may 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. It is important that you file your claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

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(Administrative Law Judge)

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(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96.5-2-a - Discharge  
Section 96.3-7 - Recovery of Overpayment of Benefits

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated July 18, 2005, reference 01, that concluded the claimant's discharge was not for work-connected misconduct. A telephone hearing was held on August 26, 2005. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. The claimant participated in the hearing. Will Sager participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer with a witness, Phillip Chada.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The claimant worked full time for the employer as a production laborer from June 22, 2004, to June 20, 2005. The claimant was informed and understood that under the employer's work rules, sexual harassment in the workplace was prohibited. In February 2005, the claimant was

alleged to have sexually harassed an employer. Although the employer found the allegation was inconclusive, the claimant was counseled regarding the employer's sexual harassment policy.

On July 13, 2005, the claimant encountered a female employee in the hallway. The employee was carrying a pair of pliers and made a movement with the pliers toward the claimant's crotch. The claimant suggested that they go into a nearby room. When they were in the room, the claimant put his hand on the employee's cheek and asked the employee if she wanted a kiss. The claimant did not respond, but he felt that she wanted to kiss him so he attempted to kiss the employee. The employee backed away, and complained to the human resources manager about what had happened. Another employee was in the room and witnessed the incident. He reported that the claimant had tried to forcibly kiss the female employee.

The employer investigated the incident and discharged the claimant on June 20, 2005, for willful violation of the employer's harassment policy.

The claimant filed for and received a total of \$2,338.00 in unemployment insurance benefits for the weeks between June 19 and August 13, 2005.

#### REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue in this case is whether the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law.

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.

871 IAC 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 Department of Job Service, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

The claimant's violation of a known work rule was a willful and material breach of the duties and obligations to the employer and a substantial disregard of the standards of behavior the employer had the right to expect of the claimant. I have found that the female employee made a motion with the pliers toward the claimant's crotch and the claimant believed the woman wanted a kiss. Even if that is true, it was inappropriate and a violation of the employer's work rules to try and kiss the employee in the workplace during work hours, especially after he was counseled about the employer's sexual harassment policy before. Work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law has been established in this case.

The next issue in this case is whether the claimant was overpaid unemployment insurance benefits.

Iowa Code section 96.3-7 provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

As a result of this decision, the claimant is disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits and was overpaid \$2,338.00 in unemployment insurance benefits for the weeks between June 19 and August 13, 2005.

#### DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated July 18, 2005, reference 01, is reversed. The claimant is disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits until he has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible. The claimant was overpaid \$2,338.00 in unemployment insurance benefits, which must be repaid.

saw/tjc