

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

THERESA A ADDISON  
308 E LOTTE ST  
BLUE GRASS IA 52724

ISLE OF CAPRI SERVICES LLC  
1641 POPPS FERRY ROAD B-1  
BILOXI MS 39532-2226

Appeal Number: 04A-UI-06077-BT  
OC: 05/09/04 R: 04  
Claimant: Appellant (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 for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Theresa Addison (claimant) appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated May 25, 2004, reference 01, which held that she was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits because she was discharged from Isle of Capri (employer) for work-connected misconduct. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on June 24, 2004. The claimant participated in the hearing. The employer participated through Lynn Banks, Human Resources Manager.

#### FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was employed as a full-time gift shop clerk from July 22, 1997 through May 8, 2004. She was discharged for repeated demeanor policy violations. Employees are to refrain from engaging or promoting gossip that could create a situation that is damaging to team members or the morale of the department. The claimants' first written warning was issued on April 8, 2004 for making statements to co-workers about how one co-worker performed a sexual act on another co-worker. A final written warning was issued on April 27, 2004. On a legal pad that was left lying around the workplace, the claimant had written profane comments of an obscene nature that were inappropriate. The statements were unrelated and stream of consciousness type statements such as, "...soft or hard, chicken or beef, salsa & sour cream all over my body.....three horny jello dancers.....Late @ nite rabbits come out of their holes 2 see big guns.....oh no, panties in the glove box, engine overheating, breathing heavily munching carpet...." The discharge resulted from the claimant's gossiping with a co-employee during off duty hours at a location other than the employer's. The claimant questioned a female co-employee about a bet made about her by other co-employees as to who could get the co-employee into bed faster. The employer considered this a violation of policy because it led to disruption in the work place.

#### REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue is whether the employer discharged the claimant for work-connected misconduct. A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code Section 96.5-2-a.

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 employer has the burden to prove the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The propriety of a discharge is not at issue in an unemployment insurance case. An employer may be justified in discharging an employee, but the employee's conduct may not amount to misconduct precluding the payment of unemployment compensation. The law limits disqualifying misconduct to substantial and willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661, 665 (Iowa 2000).

The claimant was discharged for repeated violation of company policy. While the employer may have had sufficient grounds to discharge the claimant, her actions were an expression of her First Amendment rights and cannot therefore be considered misconduct. Benefits are allowed.

#### DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated May 25, 2004, reference 01, is reversed. The claimant was discharged. Misconduct has not been established. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

sdb/kjf