

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

DEBRA LOHRENZ

Claimant

APPEAL 15A-UI-01391-GT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

WAL-MART STORES INC

Employer

OC: 01/11/15

Claimant: Respondent (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct
Iowa Code § 730.5 – Private Sector Drug-free Workplace

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Employer filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated January 23, 2015, (reference 01) that held claimant eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on February 26, 2015. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Phillip Roach, Assistance Manager.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for employer on October 24, 2014. The claimant was discharged after a positive drug screen after she had been injured at work on October 12, 2014. The results were not provided to claimant in writing delivered by certified mail, return receipt requested. The claimant was not offered an opportunity to request a split sample test. The claimant was not given a chance to obtain a substance abuse evaluation, and to follow its recommendations. The claimant was not referred for treatment but was discharged.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason.

Iowa Code § 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.

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.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Huntoon v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

The employer has the burden of proving disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982).

Iowa Code § 730.5 allows drug testing of an employee if, among other conditions, the employer has "probable cause to believe that an employee's faculties are impaired on the job." Iowa Code § 730.5(9) requires that a written drug screen policy be provided to every employee subject to testing. Iowa Code § 730.5(7)(i)(1) mandates that an employer, upon a confirmed positive drug or alcohol test by a certified laboratory, notify the employee of the test results by certified mail return receipt requested, and the right to obtain a confirmatory test before taking disciplinary action against an employee. Upon a positive drug screen, Iowa Code § 730.5(9)(g) requires, under certain circumstances, that an employer offer substance abuse evaluation and treatment to an employee the first time the employee has a positive drug test. The Iowa Supreme Court has held that an employer may not "benefit from an unauthorized drug test by relying on it as a basis to disqualify an employee from unemployment compensation benefits." *Eaton v. Iowa Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 602 N.W.2d 553, 557, 558 (Iowa 1999).

While the employer certainly was within its rights to test and fire the claimant, it failed to provide her with sufficient notice of the test results, an opportunity for a split sample test according to the strict and explicit statutory requirements. Claimant was not given a substance abuse evaluation, and was not told about an employee assistance program or other substance abuse programs as required by Iowa Code § 730.5(9)(c). Thus, the employer cannot use the results of the drug screen as a basis for disqualification from benefits and benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated January 23, 2015 (reference 01) is affirmed. Claimant is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits, provided claimant meets all other eligibility requirements.

Duane L. Golden
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

dlg/pjs