

**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS AND APPEALS
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION, UI APPEALS BUREAU**

ELIZABETH VAN DEUREN
Claimant

CNH AMERICA LLC
Employer

APPEAL 23A-UI-04482-AW-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 03/26/23
Claimant: Respondent (2)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Employer filed an appeal from the April 20, 2023 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that allowed benefits. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on May 17, 2023. Claimant did not participate. Employer participated through Kimberly Wittkamp, Human Resources Generalist. No exhibits were admitted. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative record.

ISSUES:

Whether claimant's separation was a discharge for disqualifying job-related misconduct.
Whether claimant was overpaid benefits.
Whether claimant should repay those benefits and/or whether employer should be charged based upon its participation in the fact-finding interview.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds:

Claimant was employed as a full-time Header Welder from June 28, 2021 until her employment with CNH America ended on March 30, 2023. Claimant worked Monday through Friday from 7:30 am until 3:00 pm. Claimant's direct supervisor was Jesus Herrera, Header Weld Supervisor.

Employer has a policy that prohibits sleeping during work time. The policy is outlined in employer's Standards of Conduct. Claimant received a copy of the Standards of Conduct. When quizzed on those standards, claimant correctly answered that employees cannot sleep during work time. The Standards of Conduct state that violation of the policy is punishable by progressive discipline or immediate termination.

On March 28, 2023, three employees reported to employer that they observed claimant sleeping in her weld area during a time when claimant should have been working. When confronted by employer, claimant stated that she was merely had her head down but was not sleeping. On March 30, 2023, employer discharged claimant for violation of the policy prohibiting sleeping

during work time. Claimant had no prior warnings for sleeping on the job. Employer is not aware of any employee who violated the policy but was not discharged.

The administrative record reflects that claimant filed for and has received unemployment insurance benefits in the gross amount of \$2,350.00 for the five-week period between April 2, 2023 and May 6, 2023. Employer did not participate in the fact-finding interview.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes:

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 disqualification shall continue 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 Code section 96.5(2)d(2) provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits, regardless of the source of the individual's wage credits:

2. Discharge for misconduct. If the department finds that the individual has been discharged for misconduct in connection with the individual's employment:

d. For the purposes of this subsection, "*misconduct*" means a deliberate act or omission by an employee that constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of the employee's contract of employment. Misconduct is 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. Misconduct by an individual includes but is not limited to all of the following:

(2) Knowing violation of a reasonable and uniformly enforced rule of an employer.

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982).

A determination as to whether an employee's act is misconduct does not rest solely on the interpretation or application of the employer's policy or rule. A violation is not necessarily disqualifying misconduct even if the employer was fully within its rights to impose discipline up to or including discharge for the incident under its policy. The issue is not whether the employer made a correct decision in separating claimant, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what misconduct warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. *Pierce v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988).

Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. Such misconduct must be "substantial." *Newman v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984).

Claimant violated employer's reasonable and uniformly enforced rule. Claimant was aware of the rule. Claimant's actions evince a wanton disregard of employer's interests and disregard of standards of behavior employer had a right to expect of her. Claimant was discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct. Benefits are denied.

The next issues to be determined are whether claimant has been overpaid benefits, whether the claimant must repay those benefits, and whether the employer's account will be charged. For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes:

Iowa Code § 96.3(7)(a)-(b) provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits.

a. 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.

b. (1) (a) If the department determines that an overpayment has been made, the charge for the overpayment against the employer's account shall be removed and the account shall be credited with an amount equal to the overpayment from the unemployment compensation trust fund and this credit shall include both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5. The employer shall not be relieved of charges if benefits are paid because the employer or an agent of the employer failed to respond timely or adequately to the department's request for information relating to the payment of benefits. This prohibition against relief of charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers. If the department determines that an employer's failure to respond timely or adequately was due to insufficient notification from the department, the employer's account shall not be charged for the overpayment.

(b) However, provided the benefits were not received as the result of fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual, benefits shall not be recovered from an individual if the employer did not participate in the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to section 96.6, subsection 2, and an overpayment occurred because of a subsequent reversal on appeal regarding the issue of the individual's separation from employment.

(2) An accounting firm, agent, unemployment insurance accounting firm, or other entity that represents an employer in unemployment claim matters and demonstrates a continuous pattern of failing to participate in the initial determinations to award benefits, as determined and defined by rule by the department, shall be denied permission by the department to represent any employers in unemployment insurance matters. This subparagraph does not apply to attorneys or counselors admitted to practice in the courts of this state pursuant to section 602.10101.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10(1) provides:

Employer and employer representative participation in fact-finding interviews.

(1) "Participate," as the term is used for employers in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means submitting detailed factual information of the quantity and quality that if unrebutted would be sufficient to result in a decision favorable to the employer. The most effective means to participate is to provide live testimony at the interview from a witness with firsthand knowledge of the events leading to the separation. If no live testimony is provided, the employer must provide the name and telephone number of an employee with firsthand information who may be contacted, if necessary, for rebuttal. A party may also participate by providing detailed written statements or documents that provide detailed factual information of the events leading to separation. At a minimum, the information provided by the employer or the employer's representative must identify the dates and particular circumstances of the incident or incidents, including, in the case of discharge, the act or omissions of the claimant or, in the event of a voluntary separation, the stated reason for the quit. The specific rule or policy must be submitted if the claimant was discharged for violating such rule or policy. In the case of discharge for attendance violations, the information must include the circumstances of all incidents the employer or the employer's representative contends meet the definition of unexcused absences as set forth in 871—subrule 24.32(7). On the other hand, written or oral statements or general conclusions without supporting detailed factual information and information submitted after the fact-finding decision has been issued are not considered participation within the meaning of the statute.

The unemployment insurance law provides that benefits must be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later determined to be ineligible for benefits, even though the claimant acted in good faith and was not otherwise at fault. However, the overpayment will not be recovered when it is based on a reversal on appeal of an initial determination to award benefits on an issue regarding the claimant's employment separation if: (1) the benefits were not received due to any fraud or willful misrepresentation by the claimant and (2) the employer did not participate in the initial proceeding to award benefits. The employer will not be charged for benefits if it is determined that they did participate in the fact-finding interview. Iowa Code § 96.3(7), Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10.

In this case, claimant has received benefits of \$2,350.00 to which claimant was not entitled. However, employer did not participate in the fact-finding interview. Therefore, claimant is not obligated to repay to the agency the benefits received and employer's account shall be charged.

DECISION:

The April 20, 2023 (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is REVERSED. Claimant was discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct. Benefits are denied until claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times claimant's weekly benefit amount, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

Claimant has been overpaid unemployment insurance benefits of \$2,350.00 and is not obligated to repay the agency those benefits. Employer did not participate in the fact-finding interview and its account shall be charged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adrienne C. Williamson", is written over a horizontal line.

Adrienne C. Williamson
Administrative Law Judge

May 18, 2023
Decision Dated and Mailed

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APPEAL RIGHTS. If you disagree with the decision, you or any interested party may:

1. Appeal to the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days of the date under the judge's signature by submitting a written appeal via mail, fax, or online to:

**Employment Appeal Board
4th Floor – Lucas Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Fax: (515)281-7191
Online: eab.iowa.gov**

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.

AN APPEAL TO THE BOARD SHALL 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.

An Employment Appeal Board decision is final agency action. If a party disagrees with the Employment Appeal Board decision, they may then file a petition for judicial review in district court.

2. If no one files an appeal of the judge's decision with the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days, the decision becomes final agency action, and you have the option to file a petition for judicial review in District Court within thirty (30) days after the decision becomes final. Additional information on how to file a petition can be found at Iowa Code §17A.19, which is online at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf> or by contacting the District Court Clerk of Court <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-directory/>.

Note to Parties: YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in the appeal or 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.

Note to Claimant: It is important that you file your weekly claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

SERVICE INFORMATION:

A true and correct copy of this decision was mailed to each of the parties listed.

DERECHOS DE APELACIÓN. Si no está de acuerdo con la decisión, usted o cualquier parte interesada puede:

1. Apelar a la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días de la fecha bajo la firma del juez presentando una apelación por escrito por correo, fax o en línea a:

**Employment Appeal Board
4th Floor – Lucas Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Fax: (515)281-7191
En línea: eab.iowa.gov**

El período de apelación se extenderá hasta el siguiente día hábil si el último día para apelar cae en fin de semana o día feriado legal.

UNA APELACIÓN A LA JUNTA DEBE ESTABLECER CLARAMENTE:

- 1) El nombre, dirección y número de seguro social del reclamante.
- 2) Una referencia a la decisión de la que se toma la apelación.
- 3) Que se interponga recurso de apelación contra tal decisión y se firme dicho recurso.
- 4) Los fundamentos en que se funda dicho recurso.

Una decisión de la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo es una acción final de la agencia. Si una de las partes no está de acuerdo con la decisión de la Junta de Apelación de Empleo, puede presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el tribunal de distrito.

2. Si nadie presenta una apelación de la decisión del juez ante la Junta de Apelaciones Laborales dentro de los quince (15) días, la decisión se convierte en acción final de la agencia y usted tiene la opción de presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el Tribunal de Distrito dentro de los treinta (30) días después de que la decisión adquiriera firmeza. Puede encontrar información adicional sobre cómo presentar una petición en el Código de Iowa §17A.19, que se encuentra en línea en <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf> o comunicándose con el Tribunal de Distrito Secretario del tribunal <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-directory/>.

Nota para las partes: USTED PUEDE REPRESENTARSE en la apelación u obtener un abogado u otra parte interesada para que lo haga, siempre que no haya gastos para Workforce Development. Si desea ser representado por un abogado, puede obtener los servicios de un abogado privado o uno cuyos servicios se paguen con fondos públicos.

Nota para el reclamante: es importante que presente su reclamo semanal según las instrucciones, mientras esta apelación está pendiente, para proteger su derecho continuo a los beneficios.

SERVICIO DE INFORMACIÓN:

Se envió por correo una copia fiel y correcta de esta decisión a cada una de las partes enumeradas.