

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

68-0157 (9-06) - 3091078 - EI

**KARA J QUADE**

Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 09A-UI-05680-E2T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**CASEY'S MARKETING COMPANY**

Employer

**OC: 07/06/08**

**Claimant: Appellant (2)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated April 7, 2009, reference 02, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a telephone conference hearing was scheduled for and held on May 15, 2009. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Jolynn Sinram.

**ISSUE:**

The issue in this matter is whether claimant was discharged for misconduct.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds:

Claimant was discharged on March 22, 2009 by employer because she sold a tobacco product to a minor. Iowa law and the employer's policy prohibit selling tobacco to minors. The claimant was aware of the law and the employer's policy. The claimant was working on March 21, 2009. She thought she had reviewed for identification from the customer, a minor, in the past and believed the customer was old enough to purchase tobacco. The claimant was mistaken as the customer was a minor and part of a Butler County Sheriff's Department sting operation. There was no evidence produced that countered the claimant's testimony that she believed the claimant was of sufficient age to purchase tobacco products and she had a good faith belief she had checked this persons identification in the past.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF 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.

871 IAC 24.32(8) provides:

- (8) Past acts of misconduct. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. The lack of a current warning may detract from a finding of an intentional policy violation.

A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer discharges him for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code section 96.5-2-a. 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 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).

For unemployment insurance purposes, misconduct amounts to a deliberate act and a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of a worker's contract of employment. Misconduct is a deliberate violation or disregard of the standard of behavior the employer has a right to expect from employees or is an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests or of the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. Inefficiency,

unsatisfactory conduct, unsatisfactory performance due to inability or incapacity, inadvertence or ordinary negligence in isolated incidents, or good-faith errors in judgment or discretion are not deemed to constitute work-connected misconduct. 871 IAC 24.32(1)(a).

In this matter, the evidence fails to establish that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning selling tobacco to minors. Claimant did not have any prior warnings for similar conduct.

The employer has a significant interest in ensuring that minors are not sold prohibited products. The claimant made a mistake in assuming she had checked the identification of the minor in the past. While perfection in performance in this area is a laudable and appropriate goal for an employer, the question is was the claimant's conduct misconduct. The evidence shows one incident of negligent performance. The claimant made an error in assuming she had checked her identification in the past. There is no evidence whatsoever the claimant intended to sell to a minor. It was an isolated incident of poor judgment.

**DECISION:**

The decision of the representative dated April 7, 2009, reference 02, is reversed. Claimant is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits, provided claimant meets all other eligibility requirements.

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James Elliott  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

jfe/pjs