

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

MAHDERE E WELDEGEBREL
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 21A-UI-20379-B2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**IOWA WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

OC: 06/07/20
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.6-2 – Timeliness of Appeal
Iowa Code § 96.3-7 – Recovery of Overpayment of Benefits

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from the June 30, 2021, reference 06, decision that found claimant to have been overpaid benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on November 10, 2021. The claimant did participate.

ISSUES:

Whether the appeal is timely?

Whether claimant is overpaid unemployment insurance benefits?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: A decision was mailed to the claimant's last known address of record on June 30, 2021. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Section by July 10, 2021. The appeal was not filed until September 15, 2021, which is after the date noticed on the disqualification decision. Claimant stated that he moved addresses to the address listed above and the mail was not forwarded to his new address until at or around the time he filed appeals in the overpayment matters.

The overpayment issue in this case was created by a ruling claimant was improperly paid unemployment benefits. Claimant was deemed to have been overpaid \$3,640.00 for the 10 weeks ending August 15, 2020.

Claimant was determined to be ineligible to receive unemployment benefits from the date of June 7, 2020 in case number 21A-UI-20377-B2-T.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.6(2) provides, in pertinent part:

The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. . . . Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision.

The ten calendar days for appeal begin running on the mailing date. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. *Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev.*, 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); *Johnson v. Board of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

Pursuant to rules Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.2(96)(1) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(96)(1), appeals are considered filed when postmarked, if mailed. *Messina v. IDJS*, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983).

The record in this case shows that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case thus becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. IESC*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. IESC*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973). The record shows that the appellant may not have had a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal.

The administrative law judge concludes that failure to file a timely appeal within the time prescribed by the Iowa Employment Security Law was potentially due to any Agency error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service pursuant to Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2). The administrative law judge further concludes that the appeal was therefore deemed timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code Section 96.6-2, and the administrative law judge retains jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the appeal. See, *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

Iowa Code section 96.3(7)a-b, as amended in 2008, 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.

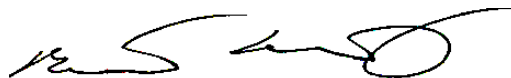
(b) However, provided the benefits were not received as the result of fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual, benefits shall not be recovered from an individual if the employer did not participate in the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to section 96.6, subsection 2, and 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.

The administrative law judge concludes that claimant was overpaid unemployment insurance benefits in the amount of \$3,640.00 for the ten weeks ending August 15, 2020, pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.3-7 as the disqualification decision that created the overpayment decision has now been affirmed.

DECISION:

The June 30, 2021, reference 06, decision is affirmed. Although the appeal in this case was deemed timely, the decision of the representative remains in effect as claimant was overpaid state unemployment benefits in the amount of \$3,640.00.



Blair A. Bennett
Administrative Law Judge

December 10, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

bab/scn