

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

STACY ROWE
Claimant

APPEAL NO: 14A-UI-03195-ET

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

NPC INTERNATIONAL INC
Employer

OC: 02/16/14
Claimant: Respondent (2)

Section 96.5-1 – Voluntary Leaving

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the March 13, 2014, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits to the claimant. After due notice was issued, a telephone hearing was held before Administrative Law Judge Julie Elder on April 15, 2014. The claimant did not respond to the hearing notice by providing a phone number where she could be reached at the date and time of the hearing as evidenced by the absence of her name and phone number on the Clear2There screen showing whether the parties have called in for the hearing as instructed by the hearing notice. The claimant did not participate in the hearing or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice. Kelly Kramer, Area Manager, participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the claimant voluntarily left her employment with good cause attributable to the employer.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as a part-time cook for Pizza Hut from July 18, 2013 to February 12, 2014. On February 12, 2014, the claimant called the manager and stated she was “done” and would not be working anymore shifts for the employer. She never talked to Area Manager Kelly Kramer, who in the restaurant approximately once per week, about any issues or concerns she had with her employment or any management or staff members and consequently Ms. Kramer does not know why the claimant voluntarily left her employment.

The claimant has claimed and received unemployment insurance benefits since her separation from this employer.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant voluntarily left her employment without good cause attributable to the employer.

Iowa Code section 96.5-1 provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

1. Voluntary quitting. If the individual has left work voluntarily without good cause attributable to the individual's employer, if so found by the department.

In general, a voluntary quit means discontinuing the employment because the employee no longer desires to remain in the relationship of an employee with the employer from whom the employee has separated. 871 IAC 24.25. Leaving because of unlawful, intolerable, or detrimental working conditions would be good cause. 871 IAC 24.26(3),(4). Leaving because of dissatisfaction with the work environment is not good cause. 871 IAC 24.25(1). The claimant has the burden of proving that the voluntary leaving was for good cause attributable to the employer. Iowa Code section 96.6-2. In this case the claimant did not participate in the hearing and provide any testimony about why she left her employment or that her leaving was attributable to the employer. Consequently, the administrative law judge must conclude the claimant has not met her burden of proving that her leaving was for good cause attributable to the employer. Therefore, benefits must be denied.

871 IAC 24.10 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.

(2) "A continuous pattern of nonparticipation in the initial determination to award benefits," pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, as the term is used for an entity representing employers, means on 25 or more occasions in a calendar quarter beginning with the first calendar quarter of 2009, the entity files appeals after failing to participate. Appeals filed but withdrawn before the day of the contested case hearing will not be considered in determining if a continuous pattern of nonparticipation exists.

The division administrator shall notify the employer's representative in writing after each such appeal.

(3) If the division administrator finds that an entity representing employers as defined in Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, has engaged in a continuous pattern of nonparticipation, the division administrator shall suspend said representative for a period of up to six months on the first occasion, up to one year on the second occasion and up to ten years on the third or subsequent occasion. Suspension by the division administrator constitutes final agency action and may be appealed pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.19.

(4) "Fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual," as the term is used for claimants in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means providing knowingly false statements or knowingly false denials of material facts for the purpose of obtaining unemployment insurance benefits. Statements or denials may be either oral or written by the claimant. Inadvertent misstatements or mistakes made in good faith are not considered fraud or willful misrepresentation.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code section 96.3(7)"b" as amended by 2008 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2160.

The unemployment insurance law requires benefits be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later denied benefits even if the claimant acted in good faith and was not at fault. However, a claimant will not have to repay an overpayment when an initial decision to award benefits on an employment separation issue is reversed on appeal if two conditions are met: (1) the claimant did not receive the benefits due to fraud or willful misrepresentation, and (2) the employer failed to participate in the initial proceeding that awarded benefits. In addition, if a claimant is not required to repay an overpayment because the employer failed to participate in the initial proceeding, the employer's account will be charged for the overpaid benefits. Iowa Code section 96.3-7-a, -b.

The claimant received benefits but has been denied benefits as a result of this decision. The claimant, therefore, was overpaid benefits.

Because the claimant did not receive benefits due to fraud or willful misrepresentation and employer failed to participate in the finding interview, the claimant is not required to repay the overpayment and the employer remains subject to charge for the overpaid benefits.

While the employer representative was present for the fact-finding interview, she could not offer any meaningful information in response to the claimant's statement and said, "The only information I received from the employer is that the claimant was considered to have voluntarily quit without notice when she walked out. I have no other details." She requested 48 hours to get information to rebut the claimant's statement but did not provide any such information after that time was granted. The documentation provided by the employer representative prior to, and during, the interview consisted of the same information indicating the claimant quit without notice. Neither the representative's statement nor documentation meets the definition of "participation" as required. Therefore, the administrative law judge finds that while the claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$851.00, she shall not be required to repay the benefits because the employer failed to participate in the fact-finding interview. The claimant will not receive any further benefits and those she has received will be charged to the employer's account.

DECISION:

The March 13, 2014, reference 01, decision is reversed. The claimant voluntarily left her employment without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are withheld until such time as she has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times her weekly benefit amount, provided she is otherwise eligible. The claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$851.00 but recovery of the overpayment from the claimant is waived. The employer's account shall be charged for those benefits.

Julie Elder
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

je/css