

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**ANTONIO GREER**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO: 09A-UI-13661-E**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**WHITAKER FOODS INC**  
Employer

**OC: 08-09-09**  
**Claimant: Appellant (2)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge/Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The claimant filed a timely appeal from the September 10, 2009, reference 01, decision that denied benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held in Waterloo, Iowa, before Administrative Law Judge Julie Elder on February 1, 2010. The claimant participated in the hearing. The employer did not respond to the hearing notice and did not participate in the hearing or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice.

**ISSUE:**

The issue is whether the employer discharged the claimant for work-connected misconduct.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as a full-time line leader for Whitaker Foods from July 2, 2008 to August 13, 2009. He had a verbal disagreement with another employee but does not know if that was the reason for his termination from his employment as he was never given a specific reason for his termination.

**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 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.

The employer has the burden of proving disqualifying misconduct. 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 substantial and 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). The employer did not appear for the hearing and provide any evidence of the reason for the claimant's termination from his employment. Because the employer bears the burden of proving disqualifying misconduct it is incumbent upon it to appear and present evidence of misconduct if it wishes to challenge the claimant's receipt of unemployment insurance benefits. In this case the employer did not do so and did not meet its burden of proving disqualifying job misconduct as defined by Iowa law. Therefore, benefits are allowed.

**DECISION:**

The September 10, 2009, reference 01, decision is reversed. The claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

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Julie Elder  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

je/css