

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

ROD L GLACKIN
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 20A-UI-02803-B2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

FARMERS COOP SOCIETY
Employer

OC: 03/01/20
Claimant: Respondent (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5-3-a – Work Refusal
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment
Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct
871 IA Admin. Code 24(10) – Employer Participation in Fact Finding
Federal Law PL 116-136 Sec. 2104 – Recovery of Overpayment of Federal Benefit

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Employer filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated March 24, 2020, reference 01, which held claimant eligible for unemployment insurance benefits due to a refusal to accept work. After due notice, a telephone conference hearing was scheduled for and held on May 4, 2020. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Michael Crist. Employer's Exhibits 1-3 and Department Exhibit A was admitted into evidence. Claimant waived in the issue of federal benefits received.

ISSUES:

Whether claimant was discharged for misconduct?

Whether claimant was overpaid benefits?

If claimant was overpaid benefits, should claimant repay benefits or should employer be charged due to employer's participation or lack thereof in fact finding?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for employer on February 28, 2020. Employer discharged claimant on February 28, 2020 because claimant had not taken another job or applied to jobs claimant was eligible to receive in a timely manner.

Claimant was hired in 2017 as a full time semi driver for employer. In November, 2018 claimant was involved in an accident where the driver of a car hit was killed. Claimant had physical and psychological injuries from the event. Claimant was released back to work with no physical

restrictions for the last time on November, 2019. Claimant was placed at a facility employer did not own, doing millwork.

Employer repeatedly alerted claimant that this substitute job could not last as employer did not own the facility where claimant was working. Employer kept claimant working at the facility for three months after claimant was released with no restrictions.

Employer knew that claimant was suffering from PTSD since the accident. Employer did not attempt to force claimant back behind the wheel of a semi, rather allowing claimant to apply for other positions.

Claimant did apply for, and was not given, a position as a manager at a separate mill that employer did own. Employer indicated claimant did not have the necessary mill managerial background for the position.

Prior to his termination, claimant gave to employer a statement from his psychiatrist indicating that it was recommended claimant not go back to driving.

Claimant has received unemployment benefits from the state and federal government in this matter.

Employer did substantially participate in fact finding in this matter by participating in fact finding.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.5(2)a 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:

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 Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(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.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Huntoon v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 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.

A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work connected misconduct. Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has the burden to establish the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982), Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a.

The employer bears the burden of proving that a claimant is disqualified from receiving benefits because of substantial misconduct within the meaning of Iowa Code section 96.5(2). *Myers*, 462 N.W.2d at 737. 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. Because our unemployment compensation law is designed to protect workers from financial hardships when they become unemployed through no fault of their own, we construe the provisions "liberally to carry out its humane and beneficial purpose." *Bridgestone/Firestone, Inc. v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 570 N.W.2d 85, 96 (Iowa 1997). "[C]ode provisions which operate to work a forfeiture of benefits are strongly construed in favor of the claimant." *Diggs v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 478 N.W.2d 432, 434 (Iowa Ct. App. 1991). In this matter, it is hard to determine what the alleged act of misconduct is. It cannot be that claimant did not show up for work, and work hard wherever he was working. He did show up, and he did work hard. Claimant also did apply for a job within the company, but employer did not grant the job to claimant as they wanted someone with a different skill set.

In this matter, the evidence fails to establish that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning applying to and getting accepted to a substitute position where employer felt it could place claimant. Claimant was not warned concerning this policy.

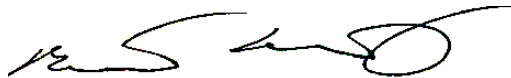
The last incident, which brought about the discharge, fails to constitute misconduct because employer did not show any action on the part of claimant that would equate to misconduct. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was not discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is not disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

The overpayment issue is moot.

The issue of employer participation is moot.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated March 24, 2020, reference 01, is affirmed. Claimant is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits, provided claimant meets all other eligibility requirements.



Blair A. Bennett
Administrative Law Judge

May 11, 2020
Decision Dated and Mailed

bab/scn