

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**MARK GUNTER**

Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 09A-UI-17693-AT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**HEARTLAND EXPRESS INC OF IOWA**

Employer

**Original Claim: 10/18/09  
Claimant: Respondent (2-R)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Heartland Express, Inc. of Iowa filed a timely appeal from an unemployment insurance decision dated November 19, 2009, reference 01, that allowed benefits to Mark Gunter. After due notice was issued, a telephone hearing was held December 16, 2009, with Mr. Gunter participating. Operations Manager Cliff Chapman and Human Resources Manager Greg Stewart participated for the employer. Claimant Exhibits A through C were admitted into evidence.

**ISSUE:**

Was the claimant discharged for misconduct?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having heard the testimony of the witnesses and having examined all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Mark Gunter was employed as a driver by Heartland Express, Inc. of Iowa from December 11, 2004, until he was discharged October 9, 2009. The incident causing his discharge occurred on October 8, 2009, when Mr. Gunter refused an intra-city load on the basis that it would not result in any revenue for him. Heartland drivers are not allowed to decline a load unless they lack sufficient hours in which to complete the run. On June 4, 2009, Mr. Gunter received notification from the company that there would be no compensation paid for intra-city moves. On or about September 14, 2009, Operations Manager Cliff Chapman counseled Mr. Gunter for refusing a load while he was on home time. As a result of the refusal, Mr. Gunter was off the road for ten days while his truck was generating no revenue for the company or for himself.

Mr. Gunter has received unemployment insurance benefits since filing a claim effective October 18, 2009.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

The question is whether the evidence establishes that the claimant was discharged for misconduct in connection with his employment. It does.

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 evidence establishes that Mr. Gunter declined a load on October 8, 2009, because he would not make any money in the intra-city move. It also establishes that Mr. Gunter was aware that the company would not pay for an intra-city move and that he had received a counseling less than a month earlier for declining a load for an improper reason. This evidence is sufficient to establish insubordination, one form of misconduct. Benefits are withheld.

Iowa Code section 96.3-7, 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) 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. 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. The employer shall not be charged with the benefits.

(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 question of whether the claimant must repay benefits already received is remanded to the Unemployment Insurance Services Division.

**DECISION:**

The unemployment insurance decision dated November 19, 2009, reference 01, is reversed. Benefits are withheld until the claimant has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible. The question of repayment of benefits is remanded to the Unemployment Insurance Services Division.

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Dan Anderson  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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