

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

JUSTIN D CASON

Claimant

ADVANCED DRAINAGE SYSTEMS INC

Employer

APPEAL NO. 14A-UI-06007-B2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 05/04/14

Claimant: Appellant (2)

Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated June 3, 2014, reference 03, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on July 7, 2014. Claimant participated personally. Employer failed to answer the phone when called at both the self-provided number and the number provided by the secretary at the place of business and did not participate.

ISSUE:

The issue in this matter is whether claimant was discharged for misconduct.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: As claimant was the only participant in the hearing all facts surrounding the discharge were derived from claimant's testimony. Claimant last worked for employer on April 28, 2014. Employer discharged claimant on April 28, 2014 because claimant was a no-call/no-show for work on April 26, 2014. Claimant was accustomed to working a Monday through Friday shift of 6:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Claimant was shifted to a different department a week before the date in question. Work dates were always communicated orally and there was never a weekly schedule printed for workers to follow. Claimant was not informed he was to work on Saturday April 26, 2014, so he didn't show for work. Claimant had previously been verbally warned about being tardy, but had no problem with absenteeism. He was warned that if he was tardy any more times that he would be subject to a suspension. When claimant came back to work on Monday, April 28, he was informed he no longer had a job.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code § 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.

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 Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(4) provides:

(4) Report required. The claimant's statement and the employer's statement must give detailed facts as to the specific reason for the claimant's discharge. Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. In cases where a suspension or disciplinary layoff exists, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct shall be resolved.

(8) Past acts of misconduct. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. The lack of a current warning may detract from a finding of an intentional policy violation. The Iowa Supreme Court has opined that one unexcused absence is not misconduct even when it followed nine other excused absences and was in violation of a direct order. Sallis v. EAB, 437 N.W.2d 895 (Iowa 1989). Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984), held that the absences must be both excessive and unexcused. The Iowa Supreme Court has held that excessive is more than one. Three incidents of tardiness or absenteeism after a warning has been held misconduct. Clark v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 317 N.W.2d 517 (Iowa Ct. App. 1982). While three is a reasonable interpretation of excessive based on current case law and Webster's Dictionary, the interpretation is best derived from the facts presented.

In this matter, the evidence fails to establish that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning absenteeism. Claimant was not warned concerning this policy although he was verbally warned concerning tardiness.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, fails to constitute misconduct because claimant had not been forewarned as to company policy. 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.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated June 3, 2014, reference 03, is reversed. Claimant is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits, provided claimant meets all other eligibility requirements.

Blair A. Bennett
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

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