

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

BRENDA K WILLIAMS

Claimant

APPEAL 18A-UI-09651-DB-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

PREMIER ESTATES 509 LLC

Employer

OC: 05/20/18

Claimant: Respondent (2R)

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) - Timeliness of Employer Protest

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer/appellant filed an appeal from the September 11, 2018 (reference 02) unemployment insurance decision which found that the employer's protest cannot be accepted because it was not timely. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on October 5, 2018. The claimant, Brenda K. Williams, participated personally. The employer, Premier Estates 509 LLC, participated through witness Erica Runyon. Department's Exhibit D1 was admitted. The administrative law judge took administrative notice of the claimant's unemployment insurance records.

ISSUE:

Is the employer's protest considered timely?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds:

A notice of claim was mailed to the employer at its correct address of record on or about May 25, 2018. See Exhibit D1. The employer did not receive the notice of claim in the mail.

When employer received the second quarter statement of charges in the mail, that was the first time it became aware of the claim. The employer contacted Iowa Workforce Development and submitted a statement of protest on September 7, 2018.

There has been no initial investigation and determination regarding claimant's separation from this employer. The question of whether the claimant is separated from employment will be remanded to the Benefits Bureau of Iowa Workforce Development for an initial investigation and determination.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes employer's protest is considered timely.

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) provides:

2. Initial determination. A representative designated by the director shall promptly notify all interested parties to the claim of its filing, and the parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of the filing of the claim by ordinary mail to the last known address to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. The claimant has the burden of proving that the claimant meets the basic eligibility conditions of § 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to § 96.5, except as provided by this subsection. The claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence showing that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving § 96.5, subsection 10, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to § 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving § 96.5, subsection 1, paragraphs "a" through "h". Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision. If an administrative law judge affirms a decision of the representative, or the appeal board affirms a decision of the administrative law judge allowing benefits, the benefits shall be paid regardless of any appeal which is thereafter taken, but if the decision is finally reversed, no employer's account shall be charged with benefits so paid and this relief from charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding § 96.8, subsection 5.

The law provides that all interested parties shall be promptly notified about an individual filing a claim. The parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of claim to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. Iowa Code § 96.6(2). Another portion of Iowa Code § 96.6(2) dealing with timeliness of an appeal from a representative's decision states an appeal must be filed within ten days after notification of that decision was mailed. In addressing an issue of timeliness of an appeal under that portion of this Code section, the Iowa Supreme Court has held that this statute clearly limits the time to do so, and compliance with the appeal notice provision is mandatory and jurisdictional. *Beardslee v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979). The reasoning and holding of the *Beardslee* court is considered controlling on the portion of Iowa Code § 96.6(2) that deals with the time limit to file a protest after the notice of claim has been mailed to the employer.

In reviewing whether a protest shall be considered timely, it must be established to the satisfaction of the division that the delay in submission was due to division error or misinformation. It may also be established that the delay was due to other action of the United States postal services.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2) provides:

Date of submission and extension of time for payments and notices.

(2) The submission of any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the division that the delay in submission was due to division error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service.

- a. For submission that is not within the statutory or regulatory period to be considered timely, the interested party must submit a written explanation setting forth the circumstances of the delay.
- b. The division shall designate personnel who are to decide whether an extension of time shall be granted.
- c. No submission shall be considered timely if the delay in filing was unreasonable, as determined by the department after considering the circumstances in the case.
- d. If submission is not considered timely, although the interested party contends that the delay was due to division error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States postal service, the division shall issue an appealable decision to the interested party.

In this case, the employer did not have an opportunity to protest the notice of claim because the notice was not received. This was due to United States postal service error pursuant to Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2) in failing to deliver the notice of claim. Without timely notice of a claim, no meaningful opportunity to protest exists. See *Smith v. Iowa Emp't Sec. Comm'n*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973). As such, the employer's protest shall be accepted as timely.

DECISION:

The September 11, 2018 (reference 02) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. The employer's protest shall be accepted as timely.

REMAND: The separation issue delineated in the findings of fact is remanded to the Benefits Bureau of Iowa Workforce Development for an initial investigation and determination.

Dawn Boucher
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

db/rvs