

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

XIOMARA F INTERIANO
Claimant

APPEAL 19A-UI-01200-LJ-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

SEABOARD TRIUMPH FOODS LLC
Employer

OC: 01/06/19
Claimant: Appellant (2)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed an appeal from the February 12, 2019, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based upon a determination that claimant was discharged for violation of a known company rule. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephonic hearing was commenced on February 26, 2019, and continued to March 1, 2019. The claimant, Xiomara F. Interiano, participated. The employer, Seaboard Triumph Foods, participated through Cristina Scott, HR Generalist. Employer's Exhibits 1, 2, and 3 were received and admitted into the record without objection. Spanish/English interpreters Claudio (ID number 6347) and Monica (ID number 11645) provided interpretation services for the hearing.

ISSUE:

Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed full-time, most recently as a general laborer, from January 8, 2018, until December 31, 2018, when she was discharged. Claimant was accused of hitting her knife or hook on the cutting board and using bad language, in violation of the employer's safety and workplace violence policies. Claimant denies she did this, as she respects her co-workers. Claimant believes she has been falsely accused by her co-workers who did not like her. The employer did not present anyone with firsthand knowledge to testify for the hearing.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided she is otherwise eligible.

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...

It is the duty of the administrative law judge as the trier of fact in this case, to determine the credibility of witnesses, weigh the evidence and decide the facts in issue. *Arndt v. City of LeClaire*, 728 N.W.2d 389, 394-395 (Iowa 2007). The administrative law judge may believe all, part or none of any witness's testimony. *State v. Holtz*, 548 N.W.2d 162, 163 (Iowa App. 1996). In assessing the credibility of witnesses, the administrative law judge should consider the evidence using his or her own observations, common sense and experience. *Id.* In determining the facts, and deciding what testimony to believe, the fact finder may consider the following factors: whether the testimony is reasonable and consistent with other believable

evidence; whether a witness has made inconsistent statements; the witness's appearance, conduct, age, intelligence, memory and knowledge of the facts; and the witness's interest in the trial, their motive, candor, bias and prejudice. *Id.*

After assessing the credibility of the witnesses who testified during the hearing, considering the applicable factors listed above, and using her own common sense and experience, the administrative law judge finds claimant's firsthand testimony credible. The administrative law judge did not find Scott's secondhand testimony credible, as she had absolutely no firsthand knowledge of the final incident leading to the discharge.

In an at-will employment environment an employer may discharge an employee for any number of reasons or no reason at all if it is not contrary to public policy, but if it fails to meet its burden of proof to establish job related misconduct as the reason for the separation, it incurs potential liability for unemployment insurance benefits related to that separation. Here, the employer has not established that claimant was discharged from employment for any disqualifying misconduct. Therefore, benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The February 12, 2019, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. Claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided she is otherwise eligible.

Elizabeth A. Johnson
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

lj/scn