

**IOWA DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS AND APPEALS
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION, UI APPEALS BUREAU**

MUSAFIRI AMANI
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 23A-UI-04657-JT-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

**OC: 10/16/22
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Iowa Code Section 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal
Iowa Code Section 96.4(3) – Able & Available

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On May 5, 2023, Musafiri Amani (claimant) filed a late appeal from the February 24, 2023 (reference 07) decision that denied benefits for the week that ended February 4, 2023, based on the deputy's conclusion the claimant was not ready, willing and/or able to work that week. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on May 23, 2023. Claimant participated. There were three appeal numbers set for a consolidated hearing: 23A-UI-04657-JT-T, 23A-UI-04658-JT-T, and 23A-UI-04659-JT-T. The claimant's seven-page appeal packet, designated Exhibits A through G, was received into evidence. The administrative law judge took official notice of the following Agency administrative records: the reference 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, and 12 decisions as associated supplemental documents, DBRO, KCCO, and KFFV.

ISSUES:

Whether the appeal was timely. Whether there is good cause to treat the appeal as timely.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

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

On February 24, 2023, Iowa Workforce Development mailed two decisions to the claimant's Cedar Rapids last-known address of record. The (reference 07) decision denied benefits for the week that ended February 4, 2023, based on the deputy's conclusion the claimant was not ready, willing and/or able to work that week. The reference 09 decision denied benefits effective February 19, 2023, based on the deputy's conclusion the claimant failed to report as directed and, therefore, did not meet the availability requirements. The United States Postal Service delivered the reference 07 and 09 decisions to the claimant's residence in a timely manner, prior to the deadline for appeal. The reference 07 and 09 decisions each stated the decision would become final unless an appeal was postmarked by March 6, 2023 or was received by the Appeals Section by that date. The reference 07 and 09 decisions each included clear and concise instructions for filing an appeal online, by fax and by mail, along with

appropriate agency contact information. The claimant did not take steps to file an appeal from the reference 07 or the reference 09 decision by the March 6, 2023 appeal deadline.

On March 3, 2023, Iowa Workforce Development mailed the March 3, 2023 (reference 08) decision to the claimant's last-known address of record. The reference 08 decision denied benefits for the week that ended February 11, 2023, based on the deputy's conclusion the claimant was attending school during the normal working hours for his occupation, and thereby was unduly limiting his availability for work. The United States Postal Service delivered the reference 08 decision to the claimant's residence in a timely manner, prior to the deadline for appeal. The reference 08 stated the decision would become final unless an appeal was postmarked by March 13, 2023 or was received by the Appeals Section by that date. The reference 08 decision included clear and concise instructions for filing an appeal online, by fax and by mail, along with appropriate agency contact information. The claimant did not take steps to file an appeal from the reference 08 decision by the March 13, 2023 appeal deadline.

On April 7, 2023, Iowa Workforce Development mailed two overpayment decisions to the claimant's Cedar Rapids last-known address of record. The reference 11 decision held the claimant was overpaid \$676.00 in benefits for the week that ended February 4, 2023, based on the February 24, 2023 decision that denied benefits for that week. The reference 12 decision held the claimant was overpaid \$119.00 in benefits for the week that ended February 11, 2023, based on the March 3, 2023 decision that denied benefits for that week. The United States Postal Service delivered the reference 11 and 12 decisions to the claimant's residence in a timely manner, prior to the deadline for appeal. The reference 11 and 12 decisions each stated the decision would become final unless an appeal was postmarked by April 17, 2023 or was received by the Appeals Section by that date. The reference 11 and 12 decisions included clear and concise instructions for filing an appeal online, by fax and by mail, along with appropriate agency contact information. The claimant did not file an appeal from the reference 11 or 12 decision by the April 17, 2023 appeal deadline.

The claimant was away from home for work purposes when each of the above decisions was delivered to his residence. For a time, the claimant was in the Des Moines area. During another period, the claimant was in Wisconsin. The claimant resides with his wife, his minor children, and his mother-in-law and father-in-law. The claimant's wife is fluent in English and is a nursing student. When the claimant is home, he collects the mail. When the claimant is away, the claimant's wife or children collect the mail and place it on the claimant's desk. The claimant had asked his family to alert him to important mail delivered to the home in his absence. The claimant's family had not alerted the claimant to the reference 07, 08 and 09 decisions and had instead placed them on the claimant's desk. The claimant's family subsequently placed the reference 11 and 12 decisions on the claimant's desk.

The claimant returned home on or about April 15, 2023 and discovered all of the above-mentioned decisions on his desk. On April 15, 2023, the claimant prepared an appeal from the reference 11 overpayment decision. The claimant was due to return to this employment early on Monday, April 17, 2023. Before the claimant departed for work, he asked his wife to deliver his appeal packet to the Cedar Rapids IowaWORKS Center on April 17, 2023. The claimant's wife forgot to deliver the appeal packet to the IowaWORKS Center.

On May 5, 2023, the claimant delivered his appeal packet to the Cedar Rapids IowaWORKS staff. On that same day, the Cedar Rapids IowaWORKS staff faxed the appeal to the Appeals Bureau. The Appeals Bureau received the appeal on May 5, 2023 and treated it as an appeal from all of the above-mentioned decisions.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 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 section 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to section 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 section 96.5, subsections 10 and 11, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to section 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 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 section 96.8, subsection 5.

The ten-day deadline for appeal begins to run on the date Workforce Development mails the decision to the parties. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the Agency representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. *Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev.*, 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); *Johnson v. Board of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

An appeal submitted by mail is deemed filed on the date it is mailed as shown by the postmark or in the absence of a postmark the postage meter mark of the envelope in which it was received, or if not postmarked or postage meter marked or if the mark is illegible, on the date entered on the document as the date of completion. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(1)(a). See also *Messina v. IDJS*, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983). An appeal submitted by any other means is deemed filed on the date it is received by the Unemployment Insurance Division of Iowa Workforce Development. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(1)(b).

The evidence in the record establishes that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case

show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). One question in this case thus becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. IESC*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. IESC*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973).

No submission shall be considered timely if the delay in filing was unreasonable, as determined by the division after considering the circumstances in the case. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(2)(c).

The evidence in the record establishes an untimely appeal from the February 24, 2023 (reference 07) decision. The evidence establishes that the USPS delivered the decision to the claimant's address of record in a timely manner, that the claimant had a reasonable opportunity to file an appeal by the appeal deadline, but that the claimant unreasonably delayed filing the appeal to May 5, 2023. The late filing of the appeal was not attributable to the Iowa Workforce Development error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service. There is not good cause to treat the late appeal as a timely appeal. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(2). Because the appeal was untimely, the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to disturb the decision from which the appellant appeals in the present matter. See *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

DECISION:

The claimant's appeal from the February 24, 2023 (reference 07) decision was untimely. The decision that denied benefits for the week that ended February 4, 2023 remains in effect.



James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

May 24, 2023
Decision Dated and Mailed

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APPEAL RIGHTS. If you disagree with the decision, you or any interested party may:

1. Appeal to the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days of the date under the judge's signature by submitting a written appeal via mail, fax, or online to:

**Employment Appeal Board
4th Floor – Lucas Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Fax: (515)281-7191
Online: eab.iowa.gov**

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday.

AN APPEAL TO THE BOARD SHALL STATE CLEARLY:

- 1) The name, address, and social security number of the claimant.
- 2) A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
- 3) That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
- 4) The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

An Employment Appeal Board decision is final agency action. If a party disagrees with the Employment Appeal Board decision, they may then file a petition for judicial review in district court.

2. If no one files an appeal of the judge's decision with the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days, the decision becomes final agency action, and you have the option to file a petition for judicial review in District Court within thirty (30) days after the decision becomes final. Additional information on how to file a petition can be found at Iowa Code §17A.19, which is online at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf>.

Note to Parties: YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in the appeal or obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds.

Note to Claimant: It is important that you file your weekly claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

SERVICE INFORMATION:

A true and correct copy of this decision was mailed to each of the parties listed.

DERECHOS DE APELACIÓN. Si no está de acuerdo con la decisión, usted o cualquier parte interesada puede:

1. Apelar a la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días de la fecha bajo la firma del juez presentando una apelación por escrito por correo, fax o en línea a:

**Employment Appeal Board
4th Floor – Lucas Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Fax: (515)281-7191
En línea: eab.iowa.gov**

El período de apelación se extenderá hasta el siguiente día hábil si el último día para apelar cae en fin de semana o día feriado legal.

UNA APELACIÓN A LA JUNTA DEBE ESTABLECER CLARAMENTE:

- 1) El nombre, dirección y número de seguro social del reclamante.
- 2) Una referencia a la decisión de la que se toma la apelación.
- 3) Que se interponga recurso de apelación contra tal decisión y se firme dicho recurso.
- 4) Los fundamentos en que se funda dicho recurso.

Una decisión de la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo es una acción final de la agencia. Si una de las partes no está de acuerdo con la decisión de la Junta de Apelación de Empleo, puede presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el tribunal de distrito.

2. Si nadie presenta una apelación de la decisión del juez ante la Junta de Apelaciones Laborales dentro de los quince (15) días, la decisión se convierte en acción final de la agencia y usted tiene la opción de presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el Tribunal de Distrito dentro de los treinta (30) días después de que la decisión adquiriera firmeza. Puede encontrar información adicional sobre cómo presentar una petición en el Código de Iowa §17A.19, que está en línea en <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf>.

Nota para las partes: USTED PUEDE REPRESENTARSE en la apelación u obtener un abogado u otra parte interesada para que lo haga, siempre que no haya gastos para Workforce Development. Si desea ser representado por un abogado, puede obtener los servicios de un abogado privado o uno cuyos servicios se paguen con fondos públicos.

Nota para el reclamante: es importante que presente su reclamo semanal según las instrucciones, mientras esta apelación está pendiente, para proteger su derecho continuo a los beneficios.

SERVICIO DE INFORMACIÓN:

Se envió por correo una copia fiel y correcta de esta decisión a cada una de las partes enumeradas.