

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

REUBEN A STIGLER
Claimant

BERTCH CABINET MFG INC
Employer

APPEAL NO: 14A-UI-07642-NT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 01/05/14
Claimant: Appellant (6)

Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

An appeal was filed from a representative's unemployment insurance decision dated July 18, 2014 (reference 02) that concluded the claimant/appellant was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits after a separation from employment with Bertch Cabinet Manufacturing, Inc. Notices of hearing were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, for a telephone hearing to be held at 10:00 a.m. on August 18, 2014. A review of the Appeals Bureau's conference call system indicates that the claimant/appellant failed to respond to the hearing notice and provide a telephone number at which he could be reached for the hearing and did not request a postponement as required by the hearing notice. The employer participated by Ms. Mitzi Tann and Mr. Jeff Ortner and submitted potential exhibits for the hearing. When the claimant had not provide a telephone number by 20 minutes after the scheduled hearing time, the employer's witnesses were no longer required to wait and were released. Subsequently, Mr. Stigler provided his telephone to the Appeals Section. Mr. Stigler was contacted and stated that he had not submitted his number prior to the hearing because he had failed to read the hearing notice and did not know that he was required to submit his telephone number for the telephone hearing. Because notice had been provided to the claimant 18 days before the scheduled hearing and the claimant had been given ample opportunity to read and follow the hearing directions, the claimant's request to reopen the hearing is denied.

ISSUE:

Should the appeal be dismissed based upon the claimant/appellant not participating in the hearing?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The parties were properly notified of the scheduled hearing on this appeal. The claimant/appellant failed to provide a telephone number at which the claimant/appellant could be reached for the hearing and the claimant did not request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice.

The representative's decision had concluded that the claimant/appellant was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The Iowa Administrative Procedures Act at Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) provides in pertinent part:

If a party fails to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding after proper service of notice, the presiding officer may, if no adjournment is granted, enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party. If a decision is rendered against a party who failed to appear for the hearing and the presiding officer is timely requested by that party to vacate the decision for good cause, the time for initiating a further appeal is stayed pending a determination by the presiding officer to grant or deny the request. If adequate reasons are provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall vacate the decision and, after proper service of notice, conduct another evidentiary hearing. If adequate reasons are not provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall deny the motion to vacate.

The Agency rules at Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) provide:

If a party has not responded to a notice of telephone hearing by providing the appeals bureau with the names and telephone numbers of the persons who are participating in the hearing by the scheduled starting time of the hearing or is not available at the telephone number provided, the presiding officer may proceed with the hearing. If the appealing party fails to provide a telephone number or is unavailable for the hearing, the presiding officer may decide the appealing party is in default and dismiss the appeal as provided in Iowa Code section 17A.12(3). The record may be reopened if the absent party makes a request to reopen the hearing under subrule 26.8(3) and shows good cause for reopening the hearing.

a. If an absent party responds to the hearing notice while the hearing is in progress, the presiding officer shall pause to admit the party, summarize the hearing to that point, administer the oath, and resume the hearing.

b. If a party responds to the notice of hearing after the record has been closed and any party which has participated is no longer on the telephone line, the presiding officer shall not take the evidence of the late party. Instead, the presiding officer shall inquire ex parte as to why the party was late in responding to the notice of hearing. For good cause shown, the presiding officer shall reopen the record and cause further notice of hearing to be issued to all parties of record. The record shall not be reopened if the presiding officer does not find good cause for the party's late response to the notice of hearing.

c. Failure to read or follow the instructions on the notice of hearing shall not constitute good cause for reopening the record.

The claimant/appellant appealed the representative's decision but failed to participate in the hearing because he failed to read and follow the instructions on the notice of hearing. The claimant/appellant has therefore defaulted on his appeal, pursuant to Iowa Code §17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.14(7), and the representative's decision remains in full force and effect.

If the claimant/appellant disagrees with this decision, pursuant to the rule, the appellant must file an appeal with the Employment Appeal Board within 15 days after the mailing date of this decision. The written appeal should be mailed to the Employment Appeal Board at the address listed in this decision and must explain the emergency or other good cause that prevented the claimant/appellant from participating in the hearing at its scheduled time.

DECISION:

The representative's unemployment insurance decision dated July 18, 2014 (reference 02) is affirmed. The decision denying benefits remains in effect.

Terence P. Nice
Administrative Law Judge
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau
Iowa Workforce Development
1000 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209
Fax 515-242-5144

Decision Dated and Mailed

can/can