

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

68-0157 (9-06) - 3091078 - EI

**DOLORES IBARRA**

Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 09A-UI-05879-S2T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**CARGILL MEAT SOLUTIONS CORP**

Employer

**Original Claim: 03/08/09**

**Claimant: Appellant (2)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Dolores Ibarra (claimant) appealed a representative's April 10, 2009 decision (reference 01) that concluded she was not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits because she was discharged from work with Cargill Meat Solutions (employer) for excessive unexcused absenteeism and tardiness after having been warned. The claimant participated personally. The employer did not provide a telephone number where it could be reached and, therefore, did not participate in the hearing.

**ISSUE:**

The issue is whether the claimant was discharged for misconduct.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and having considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was hired on June 9, 2008, as a full-time general worker. The claimant was absent twice at the beginning of her employment for legal matters and she took one personal day to go to Chicago, Illinois. The claimant's other absences were a result of properly reported illness. The claimant was hospitalized four or five times and was in the clinic twice. She was diagnosed first with a virus, then gastritis, high cholesterol, and liver issues. She provided doctor's notes to the employer. The employer issued her a warning and notified the claimant that further infractions could result in termination from employment.

On March 12, 2009, the claimant woke up with an upset stomach and diarrhea. She went immediately to the store, bought medicine, and went to work. When she reached work she was ill and had to go to the restroom with diarrhea. This caused her to be eight minutes late in reporting to the line. The claimant informed the employer of her condition. She was trying to work because she thought she would be terminated for not working. The employer considered the claimant tardy and terminated her.

## REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was not discharged for misconduct.

Iowa Code section 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.

871 IAC 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.

871 IAC 24.32(8) provides:

(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 employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Excessive absences are not misconduct unless unexcused. Absences due to properly reported illness can never constitute job misconduct since they are not volitional. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The employer must establish not only misconduct, but that there was a final incident of misconduct that precipitated the discharge. The last incident of absence was a properly reported illness that occurred on March 12, 2009. The claimant's absence does not amount to job misconduct, because it was properly reported to the best of the claimant's ability. The employer has failed to provide any evidence of willful and deliberate

misconduct that would be a final incident leading to the discharge. The claimant was discharged, but there was no misconduct.

**DECISION:**

The representative's April 10, 2009 decision (reference 01) is reversed. The employer has not met its burden of proof to establish job related misconduct. Benefits are allowed.

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Beth A. Scheetz  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

bas/kjw