

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

KIMBERLY K GOODWIN
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 11A-UI-07591-M

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

BROADLAWNS MEDICAL CENTER
Employer

OC: 05/08/11
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated June 6, 2011, reference 01, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on August 22, 2011. Claimant participated personally and was represented by Benjamin Humphrey, attorney at law. Employer participated by Julie Kilgore, human resource director, and Lindsay Fett, human resource assistant. Exhibits One, Two, and Three were admitted into evidence.

ISSUE:

The issue in this matter is whether 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: Claimant last worked for employer on May 11, 2011.

Claimant was discharged on May 11, 2011 by employer because claimant left work for break without authorization. Claimant asked to leave early. Her request was denied because it would leave the department shorthanded. Claimant was upset with her coworker. Claimant asked if she would face discharge if she left. Claimant was told that she could face discharge. Claimant left for a 30-minute smoke break and then came back, notwithstanding the warning. Claimant did not tell anyone that she was leaving for break. Claimant did not leave for the day.

Claimant had a prior tardy and two prior long lunch breaks on her unexcused absence record. Claimant had many absences on her record, but all were properly reported and due to illness.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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.

871 IAC 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. In cases where a suspension or disciplinary layoff exists, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct shall be resolved.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations, and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. The lack of a current warning may detract from a

finding of an intentional policy violation. The Iowa Supreme Court has opined that one unexcused absence is not misconduct even when it followed nine other excused absences and was in violation of a direct order. Sallis v. EAB, 437 N.W.2d 895 (Iowa 1989). Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984), held that the absences must be both excessive and unexcused. The Iowa Supreme Court has held that excessive is more than one. Three incidents of tardiness or absenteeism after a warning has been held misconduct. Clark v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 317 N.W.2d 517 (Iowa App. 1982). While three is a reasonable interpretation of excessive based on current case law and Webster's Dictionary, the interpretation is best derived from the facts presented.

In this matter, the evidence established that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning absenteeism. Claimant was warned concerning this policy.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, constitutes misconduct because claimant violated a known company rule with knowledge that discharge could result. The warning weighs heavily toward a finding of intentional conduct. The prior tardy and two long lunches make this excessive unexcused absenteeism. The break of May 11, 2011 is not excused, because claimant did not inform anyone she was leaving. This is an absence without authorization. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated June 6, 2011, reference 01, is affirmed. Unemployment insurance benefits shall be withheld until claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times claimant's weekly benefit amount, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

Marlon Mormann
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

mdm/kjw