

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Section
1000 East Grand—Des Moines, Iowa 50319
DECISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
68-0157 (7-97) – 3091078 - EI**

**PATRICIA ROBERTS
3217 – 3RD AVE
COUNCIL BLUFFS IA 51501**

**JENNIE EDMUNDSON
MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
ATTENTION HUMAN RESOURCES DEPT
933 E PIERCE ST
COUNCIL BLUFFS IA 51503**

**Appeal Number: 04A-UI-09481-ET
OC: 08-08-04 R: 01
Claimant: Respondent (2)**

This Decision Shall Become Final, unless within fifteen (15) days from the date below, you or any interested party appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by submitting either a signed letter or a signed written Notice of Appeal, directly to the **Employment Appeal Board, 4th Floor—Lucas Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.**

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.

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.

YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in this appeal or you may 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. It is important that you file your claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

(Administrative Law Judge)

(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge/Misconduct
871 IAC 24.32(7) – Excessive Unexcused Absenteeism
Section 96.3-8 – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the August 26, 2004, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call before Administrative Law Judge Julie Elder on September 27, 2004. The claimant participated in the hearing. Mary Krueger, Supervisor and Kathy Heuwinkel, Benefit Specialist, participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as a full-time LPN for Jennie Edmundson Memorial Hospital from September 7, 1976 to July 20, 2004. On May 13, 2003, the claimant received a written warning for accumulating 13 incidents of tardiness between April 13 and May 10, 2003. She was also warned about rudeness to patients and staff. On October 14, 2003, the employer met with the claimant about her tardiness and the parties agreed the claimant could report for work at 7:15 a.m. during the week so she could take her grandchild to school. On March 30, 2004, the claimant received an in-house suspension for accumulating 16 incidents of tardiness between December 15, 2003, and March 30, 2004. On May 20, 2004, the employer documented a discussion with the claimant about tardiness and implemented an action plan whereby the claimant would set her watch and clocks five minutes ahead to help her arrive at work on time and respond professionally to staff and patients. On July 9, 2004, the claimant clocked in and then left to move her car. On July 13, 2004, the claimant violated the employer's policy by parking in the visitor's lot. On July 18, 2004, the claimant was tardy. On July 19, 2004, the claimant failed to respond to two pages to assist with a patient after a procedure. The employer terminated the claimant's employment July 20, 2004, for excessive tardiness and failure to follow the employer's policies.

The claimant has claimed and received unemployment insurance benefits since her separation from this employer.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related 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.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

871 IAC 24.32(7) provides:

(7) Excessive unexcused absenteeism. Excessive unexcused absenteeism is an intentional disregard of the duty owed by the claimant to the employer and shall be considered misconduct except for illness or other reasonable grounds for which the employee was absent and that were properly reported to the employer.

The determination of whether unexcused absenteeism is excessive necessarily requires consideration of past acts and warnings. The term "absenteeism" also encompasses conduct that is more accurately referred to as "tardiness." An absence is an extended tardiness, and an incident of tardiness is a limited absence. Absences related to issues of personal responsibility such as transportation, lack of childcare, and oversleeping are not considered excused. Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984). The claimant was tardy at least 30 times between April 2003 and July 2004, despite repeated warnings, an action plan and in-house suspension. The claimant had also been warned about her professionalism with regard to her interaction with patients and staff and although the claimant denies it, the employer credibly testified it observed her ignore two pages July 19, 2004. The employer has established that the claimant was warned that further unexcused absences could result in termination of employment. The final absence, in combination with the claimant's history of absenteeism, is considered excessive. Benefits are denied.

Iowa Code section 96.3-7 provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

If the department determines that an overpayment has been made, the charge for the overpayment against the employer's account shall be removed and the account shall be credited with an amount equal to the overpayment from the unemployment compensation trust fund and this credit shall include both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

Because the claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which the claimant was not entitled. Those benefits must be recovered in accordance with the provisions of Iowa law.

DECISION:

The August 26, 2004, reference 01, decision is reversed. The claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct. Benefits are withheld until such time as she has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times her weekly benefit amount, provided she is otherwise eligible. The claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$1,409.00.

je/pjs