

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**ANGELA J MORTENSON**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 11A-UI-00231-JTT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**CASEY'S MARKETING COMPANY  
CASEY'S GENERAL STORES**  
Employer

**OC: 10/17/10  
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Section 96.5(2)(a) – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed a timely appeal from the December 27, 2010, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on February 15, 2011. Claimant participated. Store Manager Lori Crouch represented the employer and presented additional testimony through Assistant Manager Melinda Rowan. Exhibits One through Four were received into evidence.

**ISSUE:**

Whether the claimant was discharged for misconduct in connection with the employment that disqualifies the claimant for unemployment insurance benefits.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Angela Mortenson was employed by Casey's as a full-time Second Assistant Manager until October 21, 2010, when Store Manager Lori Crouch discharged her for alleged insubordination. Ms. Crouch was Ms. Mortenson's immediate supervisor. The final incident that triggered the discharge occurred at the time of Ms. Mortenson's arrival for work on October 20, 2010. Ms. Crouch thought that Ms. Mortenson entered the employer's convenience store lot too quickly. As Ms. Mortenson entered the store, Ms. Crouch chastised Ms. Mortenson in the presence of customers. Ms. Mortenson responded to Ms. Crouch's flip remark about her driving with a flip remark of her own. Ms. Mortenson told Ms. Crouch that just because Ms. Crouch drove like an old lady, that did not mean that Ms. Mortenson had to do the same. The next most recent specific incidents that factored into the discharge dated from March 2010.

**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.

The employer has the burden of proof in this matter. See Iowa Code section 96.6(2). Misconduct must be substantial in order to justify a denial of unemployment benefits. Misconduct serious enough to warrant the discharge of an employee is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits. See Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000). The focus is on deliberate, intentional, or culpable acts by the employee. See Gimbel v. Employment Appeal Board, 489 N.W.2d 36, 39 (Iowa Ct. App. 1992).

While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of the current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act(s). The termination of employment must be based on a current act. See 871 IAC 24.32(8). In determining whether the conduct that prompted the discharge constituted a "current act," the administrative law judge considers the date on which the conduct came to the attention of the employer and the date on which the employer notified the claimant that the conduct subjected the claimant to possible discharge. See also Greene v. EAB, 426 N.W.2d 659, 662 (Iowa App. 1988).

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. See 871 IAC 24.32(4). When it is in a party's power to produce more direct and satisfactory evidence than is actually produced, it may fairly be inferred that the more direct evidence will expose deficiencies in that party's case. See Crosser v. Iowa Dept. of Public Safety, 240 N.W.2d 682 (Iowa 1976).

The weight of the evidence in the record establishes that Ms. Crouch initiated and instigated the flip exchange on October 20, 2010 that the employer then used the next day as the basis for discharging Ms. Mortenson from the employment. While Ms. Mortenson demonstrated poor

judgment through her response, the evidence indicates that Ms. Crouch demonstrated equally poor judgment and that it was Ms. Crouch's comment that provoked Ms. Mortenson's remark. The evidence fails to establish misconduct on the part of Ms. Mortenson in connection with the final incident that triggered the discharge. The evidence fails to establish a current act of misconduct. The administrative law judge need not consider the other matters from several months prior to the discharge.

Based on the evidence in the record and application of the appropriate law, the administrative law judge concludes that the claimant was discharged for no disqualifying reason. Accordingly, the claimant is eligible for benefits, provided she is otherwise eligible. The employer's account may be charged for benefits paid to the claimant.

**DECISION:**

The Agency representative's December 27, 2010, reference 01, decision is affirmed. The claimant was discharged for no disqualifying reason. The claimant is eligible for benefits, provided she is otherwise eligible. The employer's account may be charged.

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James E. Timberland  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

jet/kjw