

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

COREY COULSON

Claimant

APPEAL NO. 13A-UI-04653-WT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

KINSETH HOTEL CORPORATION

Employer

OC: 03/10/13

Claimant: Respondent (2-R)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Employer filed an appeal from a fact-finding decision dated April 5, 2013, reference 02, which held claimant eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a telephone conference hearing was scheduled for and held on May 29, 2013. Employer participated by Jackie Nolan, Employers Unity, as well as Neal Roth, General Manager, Amanda Turner Assistant GM and Lenor Pfeiffer, Executive Housekeeper. Claimant failed to respond to the hearing notice and did not participate. No exhibits 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 considered all of the evidence in the record, finds:

Claimant was a full-time Assistant Maintenance Engineer for the employer. He began work for this employer on January 16, 2012. He was discharged on March 12, 2013 by employer for leaving work early without permission on March 9, 2013. Specifically, he left on March 9, 2013, at 10:29 a.m. He had only been at work for approximately two and a half hours of an eight-hour shift. He contacted the Executive Housekeeper, Lenora Pfeiffer, instead of his supervisor, Amanda Turner. He never returned although he indicated to Ms. Pfeiffer he would. His stated reason for leaving was to find a friend's keys. Claimant had been warned for absenteeism and leaving early on prior occasions.

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 leaving work early and absenteeism. Claimant was warned concerning this policy.

DECISION:

The fact-finding decision dated April 5, 2013, reference 02, is reversed. 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. The issue of overpayment is remanded to the Claims Bureau to determine whether the claimant has been overpaid benefits which he is required to repay.

Joseph L. Walsh
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

jlw/pjs