

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

ALFRED P SARMU
Claimant

APPEAL 18A-UI-01185-JP-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

**OC: 03/26/17
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment
Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed an appeal from the May 3, 2017, (reference 03) unemployment insurance decision that concluded the claimant was overpaid unemployment insurance benefits in the amount of \$1,392.00 for the three-week period ending April 22, 2017, as a result of a disqualification decision. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call on February 19, 2018. Claimant participated. Samuel Agyemang and Solomon Bass participated on claimant's behalf. Sara Gibson registered as a witness on claimant's behalf, but she did not answer when contacted at the number provided. Official notice was taken of the administrative record with no objection.

ISSUE:

Is the appeal timely?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: An ineligibility unemployment insurance decision was mailed to claimant's last known address of record on May 3, 2017. Claimant received the decision sometime in May 2017, but he did not recall exactly when he received the decision. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Bureau by May 13, 2017. The appeal was not filed until January 26, 2018, which is after the date noticed on the unemployment insurance decision.

Claimant lives with his cousin and he has been at his address of record for approximately two years. Claimant's cousin also works out of town. From April 8, 2017 until July 28, 2017, claimant was in Hawaii working for the employer. Claimant was not sure what the exact date was, but his cousin called him sometime after May 13, 2017 (after the appeal deadline) and informed him about the overpayment decision.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow the administrative law judge concludes claimant's appeal is untimely.

Iowa Code section 96.6(2) provides:

2. *Initial determination.* A representative designated by the director shall promptly notify all interested parties to the claim of its filing, and the parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of the filing of the claim by ordinary mail to the last known address to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. The claimant has the burden of proving that the claimant meets the basic eligibility conditions of section 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to section 96.5, except as provided by this subsection. The claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence showing that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsections 10 and 11, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to section 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraphs "a" through "h". Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision. If an administrative law judge affirms a decision of the representative, or the appeal board affirms a decision of the administrative law judge allowing benefits, the benefits shall be paid regardless of any appeal which is thereafter taken, but if the decision is finally reversed, no employer's account shall be charged with benefits so paid and this relief from charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

The ten calendar days for appeal begins running on the mailing date. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. *Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev.*, 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); *Johnson v. Bd. of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

The record in this case shows that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from unemployment insurance decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case thus becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. Iowa Emp't Sec. Comm'n*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. Iowa Emp't Sec. Comm'n*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973).

The record shows that the appellant did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal. Although claimant was in Hawaii when this decision (reference 03), finding him overpaid benefits, was mailed to his address of record, he is still responsible for making sure he timely responded to any inquiry from Iowa Workforce Development. Claimant has failed to establish a good cause reason for not filing a timely appeal. Good cause involves circumstances beyond the claimant's control. Claimant waited over eight months after the appeal deadline to file his appeal. Claimant's decision to not have his mail forwarded, his address of record changed, or someone consistently check his mail was a personal decision. Furthermore, claimant returned from Hawaii at the end of July 2017, but delayed filing his appeal until January 26, 2018.

The administrative law judge concludes that failure to follow the clear written instructions to file a timely appeal within the time prescribed by the Iowa Employment Security Law *was not due to any Agency error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service* pursuant to Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.35(2). The administrative law judge further concludes that the appeal was not timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code § 96.6(2), and the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the appeal. See, *Beardslee v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

DECISION:

The May 3, 2017, (reference 03) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative remains in effect.

Jeremy Peterson
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

jp/rvs