

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**SIDNEY W SMITH**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 07A-UI-01587-MT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**CONAGRA FOODS FOOD INGREDIENT  
COMPANY INC**  
Employer

**OC: 01/14/07 R: 04**  
**Claimant: Appellant (2)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated February 7, 2007, reference 01, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a telephone conference hearing was scheduled for and held on February 28, 2007. Employer participated by Del Uhlik, General Manager, Denise Perlman, Human Resources Coordinator, and Hayes Kennedy, Director of Human Resources. Claimant failed to respond to the hearing notice and did not participate. Exhibit One was 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 last worked for employer on January 19, 2007.

Claimant was discharged on January 19, 2007 by employer because claimant had a railcar accident. Employer tested claimant for drugs and alcohol at that time. Claimant was discharged under a no tolerance policy for drugs and alcohol at work. No split sample was taken or kept of the test. Claimant was not sent a certified letter explaining his rights under Iowa law for split sample testing. Claimant was not offered rehabilitation.

**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.

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(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.

In this matter, the evidence fails to establish that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning drug testing. Claimant was warned concerning this policy.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge fails to constitute misconduct because claimant was not sent notice of his rights by certified mail. This requirement is mandatory. There is no alternate method of notice allowed. In-person notice of rights is not sufficient. The Iowa Courts have held that certified mail notice is mandatory. Harrison v. Employment Appeal Board, 659 NW2d 581 (IA 2003). The test was invalid due to the failure to follow Iowa law. Furthermore, in cases where alcohol is involved Iowa law provides for a second chance at rehabilitation. No such program was offered. Iowa Code section 730.5(9)g. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was not discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is not disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

**DECISION:**

The decision of the representative dated February 7, 2007, reference 01, is reversed. Claimant is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits, provided claimant meets all other eligibility requirements.

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Marlon Mormann  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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