

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

JACQUELIN GOMEZ

Claimant

APPEAL 19A-UI-01807-LJ-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

SWIFT PORK COMPANY

Employer

OC: 12/23/18

Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct

Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Ability to and Availability for Work

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.22(2) – Able & Available - Benefits Eligibility Conditions

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed an appeal from the January 22, 2019, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based upon a determination that claimant voluntarily quit her employment. The parties were properly notified of the hearing. A telephonic hearing was held on March 15, 2019. The claimant, Jacquelin Gomez, participated. The employer, Swift Pork Company, participated through Vicky Cervantes, Human Resource Manager. Claimant's Exhibit A and Employer's Exhibits 1 through 5, as well as Department's Exhibit D-1, were received and admitted into the record.

ISSUES:

Is the appeal timely?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed full-time, most recently as a management support employee, from June 26, 2017, until December 13, 2018, when she was discharged.

A disqualification decision was mailed to claimant's last known address of record on January 22, 2019. She did not receive this decision in a timely manner; she had not received it prior to February 5, 2019. The first sentence of the decision states, "If this decision denies benefits and is not reversed on appeal, it may result in an overpayment which you will be required to repay." The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Bureau by February 1, 2019. The appeal was not filed until February 28, 2019, which is after the date noticed on the disqualification decision. Claimant departed for Mexico for a family emergency on February 5, 2019. When she returned on February 20, she discovered the decision that denied her benefits. Claimant waited eight additional days to file her appeal. She explained that she had never filed for unemployment insurance benefits before, so she was not familiar with the appeals process. She initially called the number on the decision she received,

and the person at that number referred her to her local Iowa Workforce Development office, who helped her with the appeal.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant failed to file a timely appeal.

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, subsection 10, 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 representatives' 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.

The administrative law judge concludes that failure 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). Claimant did not provide any reasonable explanation for the eight-day delay between the date she received the decision and the date she ultimately filed her appeal. Therefore, this appeal cannot be considered to have been timely filed.

DECISION:

The January 22, 2019, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative remains in effect.

Elizabeth A. Johnson
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

lj/scn