

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

SUZAN M HUEBNER
Claimant

APPEAL NO: 12A-UI-00712-DT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

DM SERVICES INC
Employer

**OC: 12/18/11
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Section 96.6-2 – Timeliness of Protest

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

DM Services, Inc. (employer) appealed a representative's January 11, 2012 decision (reference 01) that concluded Suzan M. Huebner (claimant) was qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits and the employer's account might be charged because the employer's protest was not timely filed. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on February 17, 2012. The claimant received the hearing notice and responded by sending a statement to the Appeals Section indicating that she was not going to participate in the hearing. Monica Rodriguez appeared on the employer's behalf. During the hearing, Exhibit A-1 was entered into evidence. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the employer, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision affirming the representative's decision and allowing the claimant benefits.

ISSUE:

Should the employer's protest be treated as timely?

OUTCOME:

Affirmed. Benefits allowed.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The claimant established a claim for unemployment insurance benefits effective December 18, 2011. A notice of claim was mailed to the employer's last-known address of record on December 23, 2011. The employer received the notice on December 28, 2011. The notice contained a warning that a protest must be postmarked or received by the Agency by January 3, 2012. While the protest was signed and dated on January 3, it was not filed until it was faxed on January 4, 2012, which is after the date noticed on the notice of claim. The reason for the delay was that Ms. Rodriguez attempted to fax a number of times on January 3 but was not successful in getting the transmission to go through. Although Ms. Rodriguez realized that the fax had not gone through, she decided to wait until the next day to try again. She did not read the instructions on the protest form that indicated that the protest would be considered timely if

the protest was postmarked on the deadline date, and so did not proceed to place the protest into the mail.

While the claimant established a claim for unemployment insurance benefits effective December 18, 2011, she has not made any weekly continued claims and has received no unemployment insurance benefits since the separation from employment.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The law provides that all interested parties shall be promptly notified about an individual filing a claim. The parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of claim to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. Iowa Code § 96.6-2. Another portion of Iowa Code § 96.6-2 dealing with timeliness of an appeal from a representative's decision states an appeal must be filed within ten days after notification of that decision was mailed. In addressing an issue of timeliness of an appeal under that portion of this Code section, the Iowa court has held that this statute clearly limits the time to do so, and compliance with the appeal notice provision is mandatory and jurisdictional. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979).

The administrative law judge considers the reasoning and holding of the *Beardslee* court controlling on the portion of Iowa Code §96.6-2 which deals with the time limit to file a protest after the notice of claim has been mailed to the employer. Compliance with the protest provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). Pursuant to rules 871 IAC 26.2(96)(1) and 871 IAC 24.35(96)(1), protests are considered filed when postmarked, if mailed. *Messina v. IDJS*, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983). The question in this case thus becomes whether the employer was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert a protest in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. IESC*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. IESC*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973). The record shows that the employer did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely protest.

871 IAC 24.35(2) provides in pertinent part:

The submission of any payment, appeal, application, request, notice, objection, petition, report or other information or document not within the specified statutory or regulatory period shall be considered timely if it is established to the satisfaction of the department that the delay in submission was due to department error or misinformation or to delay or other action of the United States postal service or its successor.

The employer has not shown that the delay for not complying with the jurisdictional time limit was due to department error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service. Since the employer filed the protest late without any legal excuse, the employer did not file a timely protest. Since the administrative law judge concludes that the protest was not timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code § 96.6-2, the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the protest and the reasons for the claimant's separation from employment, regardless of the merits of the employer's protest. See, *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979); *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979) and *Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company v. Employment Appeal Board*, 465 N.W.2d 674 (Iowa App. 1990).

DECISION:

The January 11, 2012 (reference 01) decision is affirmed. The protest in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative remains in effect. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

Lynette A. F. Donner
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

ld/pjs