

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

SHARON M BESLER
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 09A-UI-06842-LT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

RACING CHAMPIONS ERTL INC
Employer

OC: 01/25/09
Claimant: Appellant (2)

Iowa Code § 96.5(5) – Severance Pay

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed a timely appeal from the April 24, 2009, reference 02, decision that deducted severance pay from benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call on May 13, 2009 because both parties did not wish to wait until May 29, 2009 to resolve the severance pay issue scheduled for hearing on that date. Claimant participated. Employer participated through Karen Knepper.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether claimant received severance pay for the two weeks ending February 7, 2009.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant filed a claim for benefits with an effective date of January 25, 2009 and desires to backdate the claim to January 4, 2009. She was separated on January 2, 2009 and reported receipt of \$5,976.00 in gross “severance” pay provided only upon her signature confirming agreement to waive any potential legal action against the company.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant did not receive severance pay.

Iowa Code § 96.5-5 provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

5. Other compensation. For any week with respect to which the individual is receiving or has received payment in the form of any of the following:

- a. Wages in lieu of notice, separation allowance, severance pay, or dismissal pay.
- b. Compensation for temporary disability under the workers' compensation law of any state or under a similar law of the United States.
- c. A governmental or other pension, retirement or retired pay, annuity, or any other similar periodic payment made under a plan maintained or contributed to by a base period or chargeable employer where, except for benefits under the federal Social Security Act or the federal Railroad Retirement Act of 1974 or the corresponding provisions of prior law, the plan's eligibility requirements or benefit payments are affected by the base period employment or the remuneration for the base period employment. However, if an individual's benefits are reduced due to the receipt of a payment under this paragraph, the reduction shall be decreased by the same percentage as the percentage contribution of the individual to the plan under which the payment is made.

Provided, that if the remuneration is less than the benefits which would otherwise be due under this chapter, the individual is entitled to receive for the week, if otherwise eligible, benefits reduced by the amount of the remuneration. Provided further, if benefits were paid for any week under this chapter for a period when benefits, remuneration or compensation under paragraph "a", "b", or "c", were paid on a retroactive basis for the same period, or any part thereof, the department shall recover the excess amount of benefits paid by the department for the period, and no employer's account shall be charged with benefits so paid. However, compensation for service-connected disabilities or compensation for accrued leave based on military service, by the beneficiary, with the armed forces of the United States, irrespective of the amount of the benefit, does not disqualify any individual, otherwise qualified, from any of the benefits contemplated herein. A deduction shall not be made from the amount of benefits payable for a week for individuals receiving federal social security pensions to take into account the individuals' contributions to the pension program.

871 IAC 24.13(3)c provides:

(3) Fully deductible payments from benefits. The following payments are considered as wages; however, such payments are fully deductible from benefits on a dollar-for-dollar basis:

- c. Wages in lieu of notice, separation allowance, severance pay and dismissal pay.

871 IAC 24.13(4)b provides:

(4) Nondeductible payments from benefits. The following payments are not considered as wages and are not deductible from benefits:

- b. Bonuses. The bonus payment is only nondeductible when based on service performed by the individual before the period in which the individual is also claiming benefits.

Since claimant is expected to waive any potential employer liability, payment was not for a service provided in exchange for wages or to ease the loss of income in recognition of

employment lost through no fault of the claimant, but a contractual obligation and payment in consideration of that obligation is not considered wages. Therefore, the liability waiver and confidentiality agreement consideration should not be deducted from benefits and the entire amount of "severance" pay was incorrectly defined and deducted. Benefits are allowed effective January 4, 2009.

DECISION:

The April 24, 2009, reference 02, decision is reversed. The claimant did not receive severance pay and the contract consideration was incorrectly defined and deducted.

Dévon M. Lewis
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

dml/pjs