

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

JANE E PETERSMA
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 07A-UI-07592-LT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

ELLIOTT OIL COMPANY
Employer

**OC: 07/08/07 R: 03
Claimant: Appellant (2)**

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed a timely appeal from the July 27, 2007, reference 01, decision that denied benefits. After due notice was issued, a telephone conference hearing was held on August 22, 2007. Claimant participated. Employer did not participate.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether claimant was discharged for reasons related to job misconduct sufficient to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having heard the testimony and having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed as a part time clerk from April 23, 2007 until July 7, 2007 when she was discharged. Sheila, Manager, said the other employees did not like her and did not want to work with her and she did not know what to do. Claimant also received contradictory instructions during training. Employer had not advised claimant her job was in jeopardy for any reason but issued a "write up" on July 6 for failing to stock a particular cooler and touched a security monitor, but claimant had never worked on that cooler before and another clerk said that was a third shift job and the employer had never asked her to stock that cooler. Claimant had never touched the monitor. The manager's two nieces who worked on second shift with claimant created difficult working conditions, such as saying in front of customers that she does not know why Sheila hires stupid people. In spite of bringing the incident to Sheila's attention, the behavior continued.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason.

Iowa Code § 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.

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The issue is not whether the employer made a correct decision in separating claimant, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. IDJS*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa App. 1984). What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what misconduct warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. *Pierce v. IDJS*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa App. 1988). Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. Such misconduct must be "substantial." When based on carelessness, the carelessness must actually indicate a "wrongful intent" to be disqualifying in nature. *Newman v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa App. 1984). Poor work performance is not misconduct in the absence of evidence of intent. *Miller v. Employment Appeal Board*, 423 N.W.2d 211 (Iowa App. 1988).

An employer may discharge an employee for any number of reasons or no reason at all if it is not contrary to public policy, but if it fails to meet its burden of proof to establish job-related misconduct as the reason for the separation, employer incurs potential liability for unemployment insurance benefits related to that separation. Employer has not met the burden of proof to establish that claimant acted or failed to act deliberately or with recurrent negligence in violation of company policy, procedure, or prior warning. Benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The July 27, 2007, reference 01, decision is reversed. Claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

Dévon M. Lewis
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

dml/css