

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**KAREEBA U AVERY-SINGLETON**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 11A-UI-11986-H2T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**HEARTLAND EXPRESS INC OF IOWA**  
Employer

**OC: 08-07-11**  
**Claimant: Respondent (2R)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge/Misconduct  
Iowa Code § 96.3(7) – Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed a timely appeal from the September 1, 2011, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on October 5, 2011. The claimant did participate. The employer did participate through David Dalmasso, Human Resources Representative. Employer's Exhibit One was entered and received into the record.

**ISSUES:**

Was the claimant discharged due to job-related misconduct?

Has the claimant been overpaid any unemployment insurance benefits?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as an over-the-road driver full time beginning July 20, 2005 through August 11, 2011 when he was discharged. When the claimant was hired he was given a copy of the employer's handbook which put him on notice that having an unauthorized passenger in his truck would lead to his discharge. If employees wanted to take a passenger in the truck with them they were required to fill out proper paperwork to receive permission and to pay for an insurance policy that would cover the passenger. Even if unauthorized if a passenger in an employer's truck was injured, the employer would be financially liable for those damages. Unauthorized passengers in the employer's truck are a liability for the employer and can have a negative impact on their business operations. Unauthorized passengers in commercial trucks are also a violation of federal DOT regulations that can subject the employer to fines and penalties. On August 8 the claimant was driving a truck that broke down. He was speaking to Don McLaughlin, Safety Manager about the breakdown when he divulged that he had his son in the truck with him. The claimant did not have permission for his son to be in the truck nor had he purchased the required insurance policy to have his son in the truck. Mr. McLaughlin reported the safety violation to Cliff Chapman, Operations Supervisor who discharged the claimant on August 11, 2011. Dispatcher Andy Waterman did not have the authority to give

claimant permission to have his son in the truck. Mr. Waterman did not give the claimant permission to take his son on the load with him.

The claimant has received unemployment benefits after the separation on a claim with an effective date of August 7, 2011.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct.

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.

Generally, continued refusal to follow reasonable instructions constitutes misconduct. *Gilliam v. Atlantic Bottling Company*, 453 N.W.2d 230 (Iowa App. 1990). The claimant knew he was not to carry unauthorized passengers in his truck. He did not obtain proper permission or purchase the required insurance policy to have his son in the truck with him on August 8. His actions exposed the employer to liability for any possible issue. The claimant knew from the handbook that taking unauthorized passengers even on one occasion could lead to his discharge. His actions are sufficient misconduct to disqualify him from receipt of unemployment insurance benefits. Benefits are denied.

Iowa Code § 96.3-7, as amended in 2008, provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits.

a. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

b. (1) If the department determines that an overpayment has been made, the charge for the overpayment against the employer's account shall be removed and the account shall be credited with an amount equal to the overpayment from the unemployment compensation trust fund and this credit shall include both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5. However, provided the benefits were not received as the result of fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual, benefits shall not be recovered from an individual if the employer did not participate in the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to section 96.6, subsection 2, and an overpayment occurred because of a subsequent reversal on appeal regarding the issue of the individual's separation from employment. The employer shall not be charged with the benefits.

(2) An accounting firm, agent, unemployment insurance accounting firm, or other entity that represents an employer in unemployment claim matters and demonstrates a continuous pattern of failing to participate in the initial determinations to award benefits, as determined and defined by rule by the department, shall be denied permission by the department to represent any employers in unemployment insurance matters. This subparagraph does not apply to attorneys or counselors admitted to practice in the courts of this state pursuant to section 602.10101.

Because the claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which the claimant was not entitled. The unemployment insurance law provides that benefits must be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later determined to be ineligible for benefits, even though the claimant acted in good faith and was not otherwise at fault. However, the overpayment will not be recovered when it is based on a reversal on appeal of an initial determination to award benefits on an issue regarding the claimant's employment separation if: (1) the benefits were not received due to any fraud or willful misrepresentation by the claimant and (2) the employer did not participate in the initial proceeding to award benefits. The employer will not be charged for benefits whether or not the overpayment is recovered. Iowa Code § 96.3(7). In this case, the claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits.

**DECISION:**

The September 1, 2011 (reference 01) decision is reversed. The claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct. Benefits are withheld until such time as he has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible.

**REMAND:** The matter of determining the amount of the potential overpayment and whether the overpayment should be recovered under Iowa Code § 96.3(7)b is remanded to the Agency.

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Teresa K. Hillary  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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