

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

STEVEN A STEFFEN

Claimant

APPEAL NO: 13A-UI-10725-DT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

MOLO OIL COMPANY INC

Employer

OC: 09/30/12

Claimant: Appellant (1)

Section 96.4-3 – Able and Available
Section 96.6-2 – Timeliness of Appeal
Section 17A.12-3 – Non-appearance of Party
871 IAC 26.8(5) – Decision on the Record

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

An appeal was filed from a representative's unemployment insurance decision dated August 20, 2013 (reference 04) that concluded that as of August 11, 2013 Steven A. Steffen (claimant/appellant) was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits in conjunction with his employment from Molo Oil Company, Inc. (employer/respondent). Notices of hearing were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 11:00 a.m. on October 15, 2013. The claimant/appellant failed to respond to the hearing notice and provide a telephone number at which he could be reached for the hearing and did not participate in the hearing. The employer responded to the hearing notice and indicated that Elizabeth Schmal would participate as the employer's representative. When the administrative law judge contacted the employer for the hearing, Ms. Schmal agreed that the administrative law judge should make a determination based upon a review of the available information. Based on the appellant's failure to participate in the hearing, the available information, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law and decision.

ISSUE:

Should the representative's decision be affirmed on a basis of a review of the available information?

OUTCOME:

Representative's decision affirmed; benefits denied.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The parties were properly notified of the scheduled hearing on this appeal. The appellant failed to provide a telephone number at which he could be reached for the hearing and did not participate in the hearing or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice.

The administrative law judge has conducted a careful review of the available information to determine whether the unemployment insurance decision should be affirmed. The representative's decision had specified that the deadline for appealing the August 20, 2013 decision was August 30. The claimant did not make his appeal until September 20. As the able and available issue being addressed is a week to week issue, since the claimant did not make a timely appeal, the representative's decision has become final as to the benefit weeks through September 21. The only week remaining in the claimant's then-current benefit year is the week ending September 28, 2013.

The administrative law judge notes that there was a prior administrative law judge's decision addressing the claimant's eligibility for benefits, 13A-UI-05031-S2T, issued on June 5, 2013. That decision concluded that the claimant's "regular" hours of employment with the employer was to work 20 hours per week. That judge noted that there were a number of weeks on and after April 5 where the employer further reduced the claimant's hours to ten hours per week; the judge in that case found the claimant eligible for (partial) benefits for that period of time. Neither party appealed that administrative law judge's decision.

During the benefit week which ended September 28, 2013, the claimant worked 19.75 hours.

The administrative law judge notes that the claimant has now established a new benefit year effective September 29, 2013; a new base period has therefore also been established. The administrative law judge further notes that there is a fact-finding interview scheduled between the parties for October 24, 2013, which will presumably address the claimant status and eligibility in his new benefit year.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The Iowa Administrative Procedures Act at Iowa Code § 17A.12-3 provides in pertinent part:

If a party fails to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding after proper service of notice, the presiding officer may, if no adjournment is granted, enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party. ... If a decision is rendered against a party who failed to appear for the hearing and the presiding officer is timely requested by that party to vacate the decision for good cause, the time for initiating a further appeal is stayed pending a determination by the presiding officer to grant or deny the request. If adequate reasons are provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall vacate the decision and, after proper service of notice, conduct another evidentiary hearing. If adequate reasons are not provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall deny the motion to vacate.

871 IAC 26.8(3), (4) and (5) provide:

Withdrawals and postponements.

(3) If, due to emergency or other good cause, a party, having received due notice, is unable to attend a hearing or request postponement within the prescribed time, the presiding officer may, if no decision has been issued, reopen the record and, with notice to all parties, schedule another hearing. If a decision has been issued, the decision may be vacated upon the presiding officer's own motion or at the request of a party within 15 days after the mailing date of the decision and in the absence of an appeal to the employment appeal board of the department of inspections and appeals. If a decision is vacated, notice shall be given to all parties of a new hearing to be held and decided by another presiding officer. Once a decision has become final as provided by statute, the presiding officer has no jurisdiction to reopen the record or vacate the decision.

(4) A request to reopen a record or vacate a decision may be heard ex parte by the presiding officer. The granting or denial of such a request may be used as a grounds for appeal to the employment appeal board of the department of inspections and appeals upon the issuance of the presiding officer's final decision in the case.

(5) If good cause for postponement or reopening has not been shown, the presiding officer shall make a decision based upon whatever evidence is properly in the record.

The administrative law judge has carefully reviewed the available information and concludes that the unemployment insurance decision previously entered in this case is correct and should be affirmed. 871 IAC 26.8(5).

Pursuant to the rule, the appellant must make a written request to the administrative law judge that the hearing be reopened within 15 days after the mailing date of this decision. The written request should be mailed to the administrative law judge at the address listed at the beginning of this decision and must explain the emergency or other good cause that prevented the appellant from participating in the hearing at its scheduled time.

DECISION:

The representative's unemployment insurance decision dated August 20, 2013 (reference 04) is affirmed. The decision disqualifying the claimant from receiving benefits remains in effect. This decision will become final unless a written request establishing good cause to reopen the record is made to the administrative law judge within 15 days of the date of this decision.

Lynette A. F. Donner
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

ld/pjs