

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

TIMOTHY R DEWOLF
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 09A-UI-01498-LT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

WAL-MART STORES INC
Employer

OC: 11/23/08 R: 01
Claimant: Appellant (2)

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed a timely appeal from the January 22, 2009, reference 01, decision that denied benefits. After due notice was issued, a telephone conference hearing was held on February 18, 2009. Claimant participated. Employer participated through Chad Bennett and Jason Anglen.

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 most recently worked full-time as a meat processor and was employed from December 12, 2006 until November 18, 2008 when he was discharged. A slicer and saw table in the meat department were not cleaned properly on November 14, 2008. He had to clock out so he “did not go over hours.” He had repeatedly advised manager Anglen the department of three employees was overworked and needed more help. He had been warned on April 16, 2008 for failure to clean the meat slicer and band saw to expected standards. He was also coached on March 1, 2008 for the same issues. There were other situations when claimant arrived to work in the morning to find that Anglen and other employees Bob Fromm, Team Leader, and Bob Young, Meat Processor, left without completing cleaning the rotisserie ovens and slicer but were not written up for those violations.

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).

In an at-will employment environment 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. Even had claimant done as alleged, since the consequence was more severe than others received for the same offense, the disparate application of the policy cannot support a disqualification from benefits. Benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The January 22, 2009, 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