

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

DEREK J HEIN
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 09A-UI-01794-LT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**NPC INTERNATIONAL INC
PIZZA HUT**
Employer

**OC: 01/04/09 R: 03
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the January 28, 2009, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a telephone conference hearing was held on February 25, 2009. Claimant participated. Employer participated through Laurie Peterson.

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 restaurant general manager and was employed from August 1995 until October 18, 2008 when he was discharged for failure to have accurate cash counts. A cash specialist in the corporate office e-mailed Peterson and told her the cash counts were not done while she was on vacation but no specific date or related detailed information was available at hearing about the issue. Employer believed he had been warned about the issue but had no specific information to provide about the dates of the warnings or the specific supporting details. Claimant knew he was supposed to be doing them and started recording them on October 13 and had not done them before that because of a “burn out” issue related to him working 65 hours per week without enough support from shift managers or response to his concerns from Kathy Dewald of the human resources department so he could take time to take a vacation.

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. This conduct was merely the result of being overworked without a reasonable opportunity for time off or a vacation. Furthermore, employer's evidence was so lacking in reasonable detail that it cannot support a finding that claimant acted deliberately or with recurrent negligence in violation of company policy, procedure, or prior warning. Benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The January 28, 2009, reference 01, decision is affirmed. 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