

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**HEATHER K BEHRENS**

Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 11A-UI-12681-NT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**CASEY'S MARKETING COMPANY**

Employer

**OC: 08/21/11**

**Claimant: Respondent (2R)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge

Section 96.3-7 – Benefit Overpayment

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Employer filed a timely appeal from a representative's decision dated September 14, 2011, reference 01, which held claimant eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a telephone hearing was scheduled for and held on October 19, 2011. Although notified, the claimant did not participate. Participating for the employer was Diana Fossum, Area Supervisor.

**ISSUE:**

The issue in this matter is whether the claimant was discharged for misconduct sufficient to warrant the denial of unemployment benefits.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge, having considered the evidence in the record, finds: Heather Behrens was employed by Casey's Marketing Company from October 22, 2008 until August 22, 2011 when she was discharged from employment. Ms. Behrens worked as a full-time cashier/kitchen worker and was paid by the hour.

Ms. Behrens was discharged after she provided confidential information to another employee who was suspected of theft. The claimant became aware that the company was investigating an hourly employee for the theft of company property. Ms. Behrens, without the approval or knowledge of company management, contacted the hourly employee by telephone to warn him of the investigation. Because the claimant's conduct compromised the investigation that had caused the other employee to quit before he could be discharged, a decision was made to terminate Ms. Behrens from her employment.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

The question before the administrative law judge is whether the evidence in the record sufficient to warrant the denial of unemployment insurance benefits. It is.

Iowa Code section 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 this matter. See Iowa Code section 96.6.2. Misconduct must be substantial in order to justify a denial of unemployment insurance benefits. The focus is on deliberate, intentional or culpable acts by the employee. See Gimbel v. Employment Appeal Board, 489 N.W.2d 36, 39 (Iowa Ct. App. 1992).

In this matter the claimant was discharged after it was determined that she had intentionally provided confidential information regarding the investigation of theft to an employee who was suspected of the theft by the company. The claimant knew or should have known that providing confidential information of this nature to an individual who was being investigated by the company not only violated the company's policy but also jeopardized the investigation into the theft.

There being no evidence to the contrary, the administrative law judge concludes that the claimant's conduct showed a willful disregard for the employer's reasonable interests and standards of behavior that the employer had a right to expect of its employees under the provision of the Employment Security Law. Unemployment insurance benefits are withheld.

Iowa Code section 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.

**DECISION:**

The representative's decision dated September 14, 2011, reference 01, is reversed. The claimant is disqualified. Unemployment insurance benefits are withheld until the claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times her weekly benefit amount, providing that she is otherwise eligible. The issue of whether the claimant must repay the unemployment benefits is remanded to the UIS Division for determination.

---

Terence P. Nice  
Administrative Law Judge

---

Decision Dated and Mailed

css/css