

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

RYAN J MEESTER
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 13A-UI-06770-S2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

THE CBE GROUP INC
Employer

OC: 05/19/13
Claimant: Respondent (2/R)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct
Section 96.3-7 – Overpayment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The CBE Group (employer) appealed a representative's June 5, 2013 decision (reference 01) that concluded Ryan Meester (claimant) was discharged and there was no evidence of willful or deliberate misconduct. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for July 12, 2013. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Nathan Jones, Operations Manager and Toni Babcock, Human Resources Manager. The employer offered and Exhibit One was received into evidence.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the claimant was separated from employment for any disqualifying reason.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was hired on June 20, 2005, as a full-time supervisor of operations. The claimant received access to the employer's online handbook. On November 1, 2012, the employer issued the claimant a verbal coaching for making an inappropriate remark to a subordinate. The employer notified the claimant that further infractions could result in termination from employment. On April 15, 2013, the employer issued the claimant a written warning for sharing confidential information in violation of company policy. The employer notified the claimant that further infractions could result in termination from employment.

On May 16, 2013, the claimant came around a corner where a subordinate was stretching. He told her to be careful because he could break her fingers. He was implying that he was bigger than her and could accidentally hurt her. The claimant pretended to box with a different subordinate. Someone told him to be careful because she was pregnant. The claimant said he could punch her in the face because her face was not pregnant. He meant it as a joke.

On May 17, 2013, a subordinate was sitting close to her computer and the claimant commented on her eyesight. The subordinate said her eyesight was twenty-twenty and she could see

through walls. The claimant said that was x-ray vision and he would not want it. If he had it he could look through people's clothes. The claimant did not mean to imply he could look through the subordinate's clothing specifically.

On May 17, 2013, the subordinates reported the claimant's actions on May 16 and 17, 2013. The employer terminated the claimant on May 17, 2013, for inappropriate comments to subordinates after having been previously warned of failure to follow the employer's policies.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged for misconduct.

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 establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). Repeated failure to follow an employer's instructions in the performance of duties is misconduct. Gilliam v. Atlantic Bottling Company, 453 N.W.2d 230 (Iowa App. 1990). An employer has a right to expect employees to follow instructions in the performance of the job. The claimant disregarded the employer's right by repeatedly failing to follow the employer's instructions in his treatment of subordinates. The claimant's disregard of the employer's interests is misconduct. As such the claimant is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits.

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.

The claimant has received benefits since filing the claim herein. Pursuant to this decision, those benefits may now constitute an overpayment. The issue of the overpayment is remanded for determination.

DECISION:

The representative's June 5, 2013, decision (reference 01) is reversed. The claimant is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits because the claimant was discharged from work for misconduct. Benefits are withheld until the claimant has worked in and has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times the claimant's weekly benefit amount provided the claimant is otherwise eligible. The issue of the overpayment is remanded for determination.

Beth A. Scheetz
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

bas/css