

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

LINDA S MASEK
Claimant

SPECIALTY SALES INC
Employer

APPEAL NO. 18A-UI-07105-B2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 06/10/18
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated June 26, 2018, reference 01, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on July 26, 2018. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by John Mahler. Employer's Exhibits 1-6 and Claimant's Exhibits A-B were admitted into evidence.

ISSUE:

The issue in this matter is whether claimant was discharged for misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for employer on June 1, 2018. Employer discharged claimant on June 6, 2018 because claimant was allegedly repeatedly disrespectful to management, her co-workers, and people that she supervised after repeated warnings.

Employer detailed numerous instances wherein claimant was not appropriate in dealing with co-workers. Employer gave claimant warnings on May 21, 2018 and May 25, 2018. At the time of giving each warning, claimant refused to sign for the warnings, although she received them and read them. The day after employer gave claimant her second warning, employer stated that claimant was again rude to the employees she supervised.

Employer forwarded three notes from employees, each of them detailing that claimant's abrasive and aggressive actions caused them great discomfort, with one of the three employees quitting work to get away from claimant's actions.

Claimant stated that all of the allegations surrounding her termination were false, and that they were false on each of the warnings. She stated that it was employer who was aggressive to her at a meeting that was held on May 17, 2018, and that she hadn't been aggressive to her co-workers. Claimant stated that the only reason she became frustrated with her underling was that she did not listen to claimant's instructions and would continually make errors.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.5(2)a provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits, regardless of the source of the individual's wage credits:

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 disqualification shall continue 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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(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.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. *Huntoon v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged the claimant for reasons constituting work connected misconduct. Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has the burden to establish the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982), Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a.

In order to establish misconduct as to disqualify a former employee from benefits an employer must establish the employee was responsible for a deliberate act or omission which was a material breach of the duties and obligations owed by the employee to the employer. Rule 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; *Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 275 N.W.2d 445 (Iowa 1979); *Henry v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 391 N.W.2d 731, 735 (Iowa Ct. App. 1986). The conduct must show a 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 the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. Rule 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; *Huntoon supra*; *Henry supra*.

It is the duty of the administrative law judge as the trier of fact in this case, to determine the credibility of witnesses, weigh the evidence and decide the facts in issue. *Arndt v. City of LeClaire*, 728 N.W.2d 389, 394-395 (Iowa 2007). The administrative law judge may believe all, part or none of any witness's testimony. *State v. Holtz*, 548 N.W.2d 162, 163 (Iowa Ct. App. 1996). In assessing the credibility of witnesses, the administrative law judge should consider the evidence using his or her own observations, common sense and experience. *State v. Holtz*, Id. In determining the facts, and deciding what testimony to believe, the fact finder may consider the following factors: whether the testimony is reasonable and consistent with other believable evidence; whether a witness has made inconsistent statements; the witness's appearance, conduct, age, intelligence, memory and knowledge of the facts; and the witness's interest in the trial, their motive, candor, bias and prejudice. *State v. Holtz*, Id. In this manner, the demeanor of the employer combined with his very specific descriptions of each of the incidents that led to claimant's termination made his testimony much more credible than claimant's denials.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. In this matter, the evidence established that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning respectful treatment of co-workers. Claimant was warned concerning this policy.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, constitutes misconduct because claimant continued to be disrespectful to co-workers after multiple written warnings. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated June 26, 2018, reference 01, is affirmed. Unemployment insurance benefits shall be withheld until claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times claimant's weekly benefit amount, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

Blair A. Bennett
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

bab/scn