

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

---

**MERLYN C NOLAND**  
Claimant

**SCHAFFER PARTNERSHIP LLC**  
Employer

**APPEAL 15A-UI-08090-CL-T**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 06/21/15**  
**Claimant: Appellant (2)**

---

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

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The claimant filed an appeal from the July 8, 2015, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits based upon misconduct. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on August 7, 2015. Claimant participated personally and through attorney, Siobahn Schneider. Employer participated through Human Resources Manager Kris Stringham. Claimant's Exhibit A was received. Employer's Exhibit 1 was received.

**ISSUE:**

Was the claimant discharged for disqualifying job-related misconduct?

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed full time as a tractor trailer semi-truck driver from September 7, 1999, and was separated from employment on May 19, 2015, when he was terminated.

On August 11, 2014, claimant reported a workers' compensation injury. Specifically, he sustained a back injury. On May 8, 2015, claimant's workers' compensation doctor released him to return to work with no restrictions. Claimant returned to work. However, his continued work aggravated his back injury. On May 18, 2015, claimant saw his personal doctor. Claimant's doctor restricted him from driving long distances. Claimant gave his doctor's note with the restrictions to his employer the next day on May 19, 2015. On May 19, 2015, claimant's supervisor assigned him to haul a load to Indiana. Claimant said he could not drive that far pursuant to the May 18, 2015, doctor's note. Employer terminated claimant for insubordination.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

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

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).

The employer has the burden to prove the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law. *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 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. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa Ct. 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. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988). The law limits disqualifying misconduct to substantial and willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. *Lee v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000).

Misconduct must be "substantial" to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. *Newman v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). When based on carelessness, the carelessness must actually indicate a "wrongful intent" to be disqualifying in nature. *Id.* Negligence does not constitute misconduct unless recurrent in nature; a single act is not disqualifying unless indicative of a deliberate disregard of the employer's interests. *Henry v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 391 N.W.2d 731 (Iowa Ct. App. 1986). Poor work performance is not

misconduct in the absence of evidence of intent. *Miller v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 423 N.W.2d 211 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988).

Here, employer has not met its burden to show claimant was insubordinate when stating he could not drive to Indiana. Claimant was relying on the restrictions imposed by his personal physician. Claimant did not act with wrongful intent in following his physician's work restrictions.

**DECISION:**

The July 8, 2015, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is reversed. Claimant is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits, provided claimant meets all other eligibility requirements.

---

Christine A. Louis  
Administrative Law Judge  
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau  
1000 East Grand Avenue  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209  
Fax (515)478-3528

---

Decision Dated and Mailed

cal/css