

IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Section
1000 East Grand—Des Moines, Iowa 50319
DECISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
68-0157 (7-97) – 3091078 - EI

DANIEL R PERCY
1022 N ADAMS
MASON CITY IA 50401

AADG INC
CURRIES-GRAHAM
PO BOX 1648
MASON CITY IA 50402-1648

Appeal Number: 04A-UI-12645-B
OC: 10/24/04 R: 02
Claimant: Appellant (2)

This Decision Shall Become Final, unless within fifteen (15) days from the date below, you or any interested party appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by submitting either a signed letter or a signed written Notice of Appeal, directly to the **Employment Appeal Board, 4th Floor—Lucas Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319.**

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday.

STATE CLEARLY

1. The name, address and social security number of the claimant.
2. A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
3. That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
4. The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in this appeal or you may obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds. It is important that you file your claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

(Administrative Law Judge)

(Decision Dated & Mailed)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct
871 IAC 24.32(7) – Excessive Unexcused Absenteeism

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Daniel Percy (claimant) appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated November 15, 2004, reference 01, which held that he was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits because he was discharged from Curries-Graham (employer) for work-connected misconduct. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a hearing was held in Mason City, Iowa on December 14, 2004. The claimant participated in the hearing. The employer participated through Mark Evers, Director of Human Resources.

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 employed as a full-time laborer from May 8, 1999 through October 26, 2004. He was discharged from employment due to a final incident of absenteeism that occurred on October 21, 2004, when he was tardy. The claimant was last formally warned on January 15, 2004, that he faced termination from employment if he had three more incidents within the next year. After January 2004, the claimant was not tardy until September 9 and October 18. On October 25, 2004, he was verbally advised if he had one more incident before January 2005, he would be discharged. The claimant came in the next morning and was discharged because the employer stated that it failed to record when he was late on October 21, 2004.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue is whether the employer discharged the claimant for work-connected misconduct. 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.

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.

This definition has been accepted by the Iowa Supreme Court as accurately reflecting the intent of the legislature. Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 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 Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The propriety of a discharge is not at issue in an unemployment insurance case. An employer may be justified in discharging an employee, but the employee's conduct may not amount to misconduct precluding the payment of unemployment compensation. The law limits disqualifying misconduct to willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. Newman v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa App. 1984). The claimant was discharged on October 26, 2004 for excessive unexcused absenteeism.

871 IAC 24.32(7) provides:

(7) Excessive unexcused absenteeism. Excessive unexcused absenteeism is an intentional disregard of the duty owed by the claimant to the employer and shall be considered misconduct except for illness or other reasonable grounds for which the employee was absent and that were properly reported to the employer.

Excessive unexcused absenteeism, a concept which includes tardiness, is misconduct. The determination of whether unexcused absenteeism is excessive necessarily requires consideration of past acts and warnings. Higgins v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 350 N.W.2d 187 (Iowa 1984). The claimant was warned on October 25, 2004, that he would be discharged if he was tardy one more time before January 15, 2005. He was not tardy again but was discharged anyway. The claimant reasonably relied on the employer's statements and the employer had a duty to honor what it told him, even if it was the result of a recordkeeping mistake. The final absence, in combination with the claimant's history of absenteeism, is not considered excessive. Work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law has not been established in this case and benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated November 15, 2004, reference 01, is reversed. The claimant was discharged. Misconduct has not been established. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

sdb/smc