

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

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AMERISTAR CASINO CO BLUFFS INC
c/o UNEMPLOYMENT SERVICES LLC
PO BOX 749000
ARVADA CO 80006-9000

Appeal Number: 06A-UI-07867-SWT
OC: 06/25/06 R: 01
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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated July 28, 2006, reference 02, that concluded she was discharged for work-connected misconduct. A telephone hearing was held on August 22, 2006. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. The claimant participated in the hearing. Shila Kinsley participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer with witnesses Junior Pura and Rachel Tompson.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The claimant worked full-time for the employer as a slot attendant from June 26, 2001, to May 18, 2006. Her supervisor was the slot manager, Junior Pura. The claimant received a warning on July 27, 2005, after she told the dispatcher that he would have to wait until she was finished waiting on a customer, which the employer considered inappropriate. On October 14,

2005, the claimant received a final written warning for not circulating in her area after a supervisor had observed her leaning up against a trash can.

The employer discharged the claimant due to inability to perform her job. Pura had evaluated her performance in May 2006 and determined that the claimant was not meeting the employer's standards of promptly responding to change lights, regularly circulating through her area, and displaying positive body language. Pura observed instances when the claimant looked tired and not enthusiastic and had failed to warmly greet guests she encountered on the casino floor. He observed instances where the claimant had walked by change lights that were lit on the slot machines. The claimant, however, was performing the job to the best of her ability. She was suffering from the effects of diabetes, which sometimes made her fatigued and caused her ankles to hurt from being on her feet. When the claimant did not respond to the change lights, it was because the lights were flashing which meant the machine needed servicing. The claimant decided to wait until the customer left the machine before servicing the machine.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue in this case is whether the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law.

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 substantial and willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661, 665 (Iowa 2000).

While the employer may have been justified in discharging the claimant, work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law has not been established. No willful or substantial misconduct has been proven in this case. At most, unsatisfactory work was proven, which does not rise the level of work-connected misconduct.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated July 28, 2006, reference 02, is reversed. The claimant is qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits, if she is otherwise eligible.

saw/cs