

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

MINDY JOHNSON
Claimant

ROCK COMMUNICATIONS LLC
Employer

APPEAL NO. 20A-UI-03754-JTT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**OC: 03/15/20
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Iowa Code Section 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal
Iowa Code Section 95.5(1) – Voluntary Quit

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Mindy Johnson filed a late appeal from the April 13, 2020, reference 01, decision that disqualified her for benefits and that relieved the employer's account of liability for benefits, based on the deputy's conclusion that Ms. Johnson voluntarily quit on January 31, 2020 without good cause attributable to the employer. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on May 26, 2020. Ms. Johnson participated. Michelle De Rossett, Human Resources Manager, represented the employer. The administrative law judge took official notice of the April 13, 2020, reference 01, decision and received Exhibit A into evidence.

ISSUE:

Whether there is good cause to treat the late appeal as a timely appeal.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: On April 13, 2020, Iowa Workforce Development mailed the April 13, 2020, reference 01, decision to claimant Mindy Johnson and to the employer at their respective addresses of record. Ms. Johnson's address of record was a street address in Baxter, Iowa. Ms. Johnson had provided the street address as her address of record when she established her claim for benefits, even though Ms. Johnson has to collect her mail from a post office box. The April 13, 2020, reference 01, decision disqualified Ms. Johnson for benefits and relieved the employer's account of liability for benefits, based on the deputy's conclusion that Ms. Johnson voluntarily quit on January 31, 2020 without good cause attributable to the employer. The employer received its copy of the decision on April 15, 2020 at its address of record in Newton. The weight of the evidence indicates that Ms. Johnson's copy of the decision was delivered to her post office box on or about the same date. Ms. Johnson collects her mail from the post office box once a week. On or about April 20, 2020, Ms. Johnson collected the mail that included the April 13, 2020, reference 01, decision. Ms. Johnson opened and reviewed the correspondence, but did not note the appeal deadline set forth on the decision. The decision stated that an appeal from the decision must be postmarked by April 23, 2020 or be received by the Appeal Section by that date. The decision provided clear and concise instructions for filing an online

appeal, for faxing an appeal, for emailing an appeal, and for mailing an appeal. Ms. Johnson did not file an appeal by the April 23, 2020 deadline. On May 4, 2020, Ms. Johnson drafted and faxed an appeal. The Appeals Bureau receive the appeal on May 4, 2020.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.6(2) provides:

2. Initial determination. A representative designated by the director shall promptly notify all interested parties to the claim of its filing, and the parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of the filing of the claim by ordinary mail to the last known address to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. The claimant has the burden of proving that the claimant meets the basic eligibility conditions of section 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to section 96.5, except as provided by this subsection. The claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence showing that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsections 10 and 11, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to section 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraphs "a" through "h". Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision. If an administrative law judge affirms a decision of the representative, or the appeal board affirms a decision of the administrative law judge allowing benefits, the benefits shall be paid regardless of any appeal which is thereafter taken, but if the decision is finally reversed, no employer's account shall be charged with benefits so paid and this relief from charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

The ten-day deadline for appeal begins to run on the date Workforce Development mails the decision to the parties. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the Agency representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. *Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev.*, 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); *Johnson v. Board of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

An appeal submitted by mail is deemed filed on the date it is mailed as shown by the postmark or in the absence of a postmark the postage meter mark of the envelope in which it was received, or if not postmarked or postage meter marked or if the mark is illegible, on the date entered on the document as the date of completion. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(1)(a). See also *Messina v. IDJS*, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983). An appeal submitted by any other means is deemed filed on the date it is received by the Unemployment Insurance Division of Iowa Workforce Development. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(1)(b).

Ms. Johnson's appeal was filed on May 4, 2020, when the Appeals Bureau received the faxed appeal.

The evidence in the record establishes that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The first question in this case is whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. IESC*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. IESC*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973).

The evidence in the record establishes that Ms. Johnson's appeal was untimely. Despite Ms. Johnson omitting the post office box from her address of record when she signed up for unemployment insurance benefits, the weight of the evidence indicates that the decision landed in her post office box on or about April 15, 2020 and that Ms. Johnson collected the decision from her post office box on or about April 20, 2020. Ms. Johnson had a reasonable opportunity to file an appeal by the April 23, 2020 deadline, but had not noted the deadline and did not file an appeal by the deadline. Instead, Ms. Johnson waited until 11 days after the appeal was due to draft and transmit the appeal that was received on May 4, 2020. Because the delay in filing the appeal was attributable to Ms. Johnson, and not attributable to Iowa Workforce Development or the United States Postal Service, there is not good cause to treat the late appeal as a timely appeal. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 871-24.35(2). Because the appeal was untimely, the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to disturb the April 13, 2020, reference 01, decision. See *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

DECISION:

The claimant's appeal from the April 13, 2020, reference 01, decision was untimely. The decision that disqualified the claimant for benefits and that relieved the employer's account of liability for benefits, based on the deputy's conclusion that the claimant voluntarily quit on January 31, 2020 without good cause attributable to the employer, remains in effect.

Note to Claimant: This decision determines you are not eligible for regular unemployment insurance benefits. If you disagree with this decision you may file an appeal to the Employment Appeal Board by following the instructions on the first page of this decision. Individuals who do not qualify for regular unemployment insurance benefits due to disqualifying separations, but who are currently unemployed for reasons related to COVID-19 may qualify for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA). **You will need to apply for PUA to determine your eligibility under the program.** Additional information on how to apply for PUA can be found at <https://www.iowaworkforcedevelopment.gov/pua-information>.



James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

May 28, 2020
Decision Dated and Mailed

jet/scn