

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

JONI L MENDOZA
Claimant

WEST LIBERTY FOODS LLC
Employer

APPEAL 20R-UI-15007-DG-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 04/12/20
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.4(3) – Ability to and Availability for Work
Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant filed an appeal from the August 24, 2020, (reference 04) unemployment insurance decision that denied benefits. Claimant's address of record has been as stated above during the entire claim process thus far. At each stage of the appeal process the claimant has stated that she has not received the notice. Non-receipt of the notice for the two hearings scheduled after the fact-finding interview is not credible. Claimant has a duty to regularly and frequently retrieve her mail at its post office box and cannot now claim non-receipt.

A hearing was scheduled in this matter for October 12, 2020. Claimant did not follow the hearing notice instructions and a default decision was entered on October 14, 2020. The claimant appealed to the Employment Appeal Board, and the Board remanded the matter back to the appeals bureau. After the Employment Appeal Board (EAB) remanded, due notice was issued, a hearing was scheduled to be held on January 21, 2021. The claimant did not respond to the hearing notice. Because the EAB did not vacate the original appeal decision 20A-UI-10334-DG-T, that hearing record, including any exhibits, is adopted and incorporated herein.

ISSUE:

Should the original appeal default decision be adopted?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Inasmuch as the decision was not vacated as a result of the Employment Appeal Board remand, the administrative law judge's findings of fact in appeal 20A-UI-10334-DG-T is hereby adopted and incorporated herein as the findings of fact for appeal 20R-UI-15007-DG-T.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The Iowa Administrative Procedure Act at Iowa Code section 17A.12(3) provides in pertinent part:

If a party fails to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding after proper service of notice, the presiding officer may, if no adjournment is granted, enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party. ... If a decision is rendered against a party who failed to appear for the hearing and the presiding officer is timely requested by that party to vacate the decision for good cause, the time for initiating a further appeal is stayed pending a determination by the presiding officer to grant or deny the request. If adequate reasons are provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall vacate the decision and, after proper service of notice, conduct another evidentiary hearing. If adequate reasons are not provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer *shall deny* the motion to vacate.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) provides:

Conduct of hearings.

(7) If a party has not responded to a notice of telephone hearing by providing the appeals bureau with the names and telephone numbers of the persons who are participating in the hearing by the scheduled starting time of the hearing or is not available at the telephone number provided, the presiding officer may proceed with the hearing. If the appealing party fails to provide a telephone number or is unavailable for the hearing, the presiding officer may decide the appealing party is in default and dismiss the appeal as provide in Iowa Code section 17A.12(3). The record may be reopened if the absent party makes a request in writing to reopen the hearing under subrule 26.8(3) and shows good cause for reopening the hearing.

a. If an absent party responds to the hearing notice while the hearing is in progress, the presiding officer shall pause to admit the party, summarize the hearing to that point, administer the oath, and resume the hearing.

b. If a party responds to the notice of hearing after the record has been closed and any party which has participated is no longer on the telephone line, the presiding officer shall not take the evidence of the late party.

c. Failure to read or follow the instructions on the notice of hearing shall not constitute good cause for reopening the record.

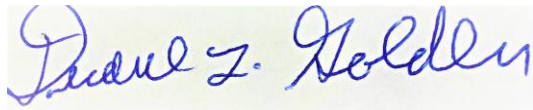
The Iowa Supreme Court has opined that a default should not be set aside for ordinary negligence or want of ordinary care. Defaults should not be set aside where the movant ignores plain instruction with ample opportunity to comply. See *Houlihan v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 545 N.W.2d 863 (Iowa 1996). Here the clear directive is to read the hearing notice and register a telephone number where the party can be reached for the hearing. The second part of that directive is to be available at the number provided at the date and time of the hearing. Further, if the party misses or does not receive the hearing call, the party has telephone numbers on the hearing notice at which to inquire. Due process requires notice and an opportunity to be heard, both of which were provided to each party. *The rule does not provide exceptions for good intentions and/or a party contacting the Appeals Bureau within a 'reasonable' or certain amount of time after the hearing is scheduled.* It is assumed an appellant intends to participate in the hearing simply by the fact that an appeal is filed, but the appellant's responsibility does not end there. Each party is required to follow the prominent specific written instructions printed on the hearing notice. The appellant filed the appeal and is held solely responsible for going forward with the case in a prompt and deliberate manner. The rule holds an appellant in default if not present *at the start* of hearing. As a courtesy, appellant was granted an additional 15-minute grace period not required by statute or rule. Here, notwithstanding notice, opportunity and additional time, the appellant failed to prosecute the case at the appointed date and time without

providing a good-cause reason for the delay or failure to do so. Accordingly, the appellant is in default and the appeal shall be dismissed. Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 26.14(7). The unemployment insurance decision remains in force and effect.

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes that inasmuch as the decision was not vacated as a result of the Employment Appeal Board remand, the administrative law judge's reasoning and conclusions of law in appeal 20A-UI-10334-DG-T is hereby adopted and incorporated herein as the reasoning and conclusions of law for appeal 20R-UI-15007-DG-T.

DECISION:

Inasmuch as the decision was not vacated as a result of the Employment Appeal Board remand, the administrative law judge's decision in appeal 20A-UI-10334-DG-T is hereby adopted and incorporated herein as the decision for appeal 20R-UI-15007-DG-T. Benefits are denied.



Duane L. Golden
Administrative Law Judge

February 5, 2021
Decision Dated and Mailed

dlg/mh