

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

**KIMBERLY C PEPPERS**  
Claimant

**TYSON FRESH MEATS INC**  
Employer

**APPEAL 16A-UI-05761-DL-T**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**OC: 04/24/16  
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

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

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed an appeal from the May 13, 2016, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that allowed benefits based upon a discharge from employment. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. A telephone hearing was held on June 8, 2016. Claimant responded to the hearing notice instructions but was not available at the number provided when the hearing was called and did not participate. Employer participated through human resource clerk, Kristi Fox. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative record, including fact-finding documents.

**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 production worker from January 26, 2015, and was separated from employment on April 27, 2016, when she was discharged. On April 26 she was accused of having failed to get along with a coworker. The employer had no first-hand information or other details. She had been warned about a similar issue on March 9, 2016, but again, the employer had no specific information.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason.

When the record is composed solely of hearsay evidence, that evidence must be examined closely in light of the entire record. *Schmitz v. Iowa Dep't Human Servs.*, 461 N.W.2d 603, 607 (Iowa Ct. App. 1990). Both the quality and the quantity of the evidence must be evaluated to see whether it rises to the necessary levels of trustworthiness, credibility, and accuracy required by a reasonably prudent person in the conduct of serious affairs. See, Iowa Code § 17A.14 (1). In making the evaluation, the fact-finder should conduct a common sense evaluation of (1) the

nature of the hearsay; (2) the availability of better evidence; (3) the cost of acquiring better information; (4) the need for precision; and (5) the administrative policy to be fulfilled. *Schmitz*, 461 N.W.2d at 608.

The decision in this case rests, at least in part, upon the credibility of the parties. The employer did not present a witness with direct knowledge of the situation. Claimant did not participate but her fact-finding interview statement denies the allegations.

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).

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(4) provides:

(4) Report required. The claimant's statement and the employer's statement must give detailed facts as to the specific reason for the claimant's discharge. Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. In cases where a suspension or disciplinary layoff exists, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct shall be resolved.

Whether an employee violated an employer's policies is a different issue from whether the employee is disqualified for misconduct for purposes of unemployment insurance benefits. See *Lee v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 616 N.W.2d 661, 665 (Iowa 2000) ("Misconduct serious enough to warrant the discharge of an employee is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of benefits." (Quoting *Reigelsberger*, 500 N.W.2d at 66.)).

The employer has not met the burden of proof to establish that claimant acted deliberately or with recurrent negligence in violation of company policy, procedure, or prior warning. An employee is entitled to fair warning that the employer will no longer tolerate certain performance and conduct. Without fair warning, an employee has no reasonable way of knowing that there are changes that need be made in order to preserve the employment. If an employer expects an employee to conform to certain expectations or face discharge, appropriate (preferably written), detailed, and reasonable notice should be given.

**DECISION:**

The May 13, 2016, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. Claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided she is otherwise eligible.

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Dévon M. Lewis  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

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