

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

68-0157 (9-06) - 3091078 - EI

KERRY B LUSE

Claimant

APPEAL NO. 14A-UI-11166-JTT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

CRST VAN EXPEDITED INC

Employer

OC: 09/28/14

Claimant: Respondent (1/R)

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed a timely appeal from the October 17, 2014, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits to the claimant provided he was otherwise eligible and that held the employer's account could be charged for benefits; based on an Agency conclusion that the claimant was discharged on September 24, 2014 for no disqualifying reason. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on November 17, 2014. Claimant Kerry Lose participated. Deb Mentzer represented the employer. The administrative law judge took official notice of the Agency's record of benefits disbursed to the claimant, which indicates that no benefits have been disbursed to the claimant in connection with the September 28, 2014 claim. The administrative law judge took official notice of the October 29, 2014, reference 02, decision that denied benefits effective September 28, 2014; based on an Agency conclusion that the claimant was unable to work due to injury.

ISSUE:

Whether the claimant was discharged for misconduct in connection with the employment that disqualifies the claimant for unemployment insurance benefits.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Kerry Luse was employed by CRST Van Expedited, Inc. as a full-time over-the-road truck driver from June 2013 until the end of September 2014 when Fleet Manager Scott Nelson discharged him in connection with a motor vehicle accident that occurred on September 24, 2014. At the time of the accident, Mr. Luse was operating the employer tractor-trailer. The rig began to pull strongly to the right and Mr. Luse was unable to steer the rig left. The rig made repeated contact with a concrete barrier wall on the right. At the end of the concrete barrier wall, the rig went off the road to the right and into a treed area. The employer erroneously concluded that the accident was preventable. Mr. Luse had not been speeding or driving recklessly. When Mr. Luse returned to the workplace to collect his belongings, he noted that the right front tire on the tractor was flat, which would explain why the tractor pulled to the right. The accident on September 24, 2014 was the sole basis for the employer's decision to end the employment.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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).

The employer has the burden of proof in this matter. See Iowa Code section 96.6(2). Misconduct must be substantial in order to justify a denial of unemployment benefits. Misconduct serious enough to warrant the discharge of an employee is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits. See Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661 (Iowa 2000). The focus is on deliberate, intentional, or culpable acts by the employee. See Gimbel v. Employment Appeal Board, 489 N.W.2d 36, 39 (Iowa Ct. App. 1992).

While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of the current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act(s). The termination of employment must be based on a current act. See 871 IAC 24.32(8). In determining whether the conduct that prompted the discharge constituted a "current act," the administrative law judge considers the date on which the conduct came to the attention of the employer and the date on which the employer notified the claimant that the conduct subjected the claimant to possible discharge. See also Greene v. EAB, 426 N.W.2d 659, 662 (Iowa App. 1988).

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. See 871 IAC 24.32(4). When it is in a party's power to produce more direct and satisfactory evidence than is actually produced, it may fairly be inferred that the more direct evidence will expose deficiencies in that party's case. See Crosser v. Iowa Dept. of Public Safety, 240 N.W.2d 682 (Iowa 1976).

The evidence in the record establishes fails to establish misconduct in connection with the employment. The evidence indicates that the accident on September 24, 2014 did not result from any willful misconduct, negligence, or carelessness on the part of Mr. Luse. Mr. Luse was discharged for no disqualifying reason. Accordingly, Mr. Luse is eligible for benefits, provided he is otherwise eligible. The employer's account may be charged for benefits.

DECISION:

The October 17, 2014, reference 01, decision is affirmed. The claimant was discharged for no disqualifying reason. The claimant is eligible for benefits, provided he is otherwise eligible. The employer's account may be charged. This matter is remanded to the Benefits Bureau for determination of whether the claimant is receiving worker's compensation benefits for Total Temporary Disability (TTD) that are deductible from his unemployment insurance benefits.

James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

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