

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

ANTOINETTE MATTSON
701 E PENNINGTON ST APT 2234
W BURLINGTON IA 52655

WAL-MART STORES INC
c/o THE FRICK COMPANY
PO BOX 283
ST LOUIS MO 63166-0283

Appeal Number: 04A-UI-12700-S2T
OC: 10/24/04 R: 04
Claimant: Respondent (1)

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 for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Wal-Mart Stores (employer) appealed a representative's November 18, 2004 decision (reference 01) that concluded Antoinette Mattson (claimant) was discharged and there was no evidence of willful or deliberate misconduct. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on December 20, 2004. The claimant did not provide a telephone number where she could be reached and, therefore, did not participate. The employer participated by Dwayne Price, Assistant Manager.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was hired on July 1, 2003, as a full-time radio grill sales associate. The claimant received a copy of the employer's drug policy and signed for its receipt on July 1, 2003. The handbook contains the employer's drug policy.

The claimant sustained an injury at work and was, therefore, required to undergo testing for the presence of drugs and/or alcohol. The claimant submitted to testing on August 30, 2004, and tested positive for cocaine. On or about September 1, 2004, the laboratory sent a certified letter to the claimant regarding the results of the tests but the letter was not sent return receipt requested. The employer sent a letter of termination on September 13, 2004, without confirmation that the claimant had received the results of the test.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue is whether the claimant was discharged for misconduct. For the following reasons the administrative law judge concludes she was not.

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).

Iowa Code section 730.5(7)(i)(1) mandates that an employer, upon a confirmed positive drug or alcohol test by a certified laboratory, notify the employee of the test results by certified mail return receipt requested and the right to obtain a confirmatory test before taking disciplinary action against an employee. The claimant must have a confirmed positive test before disciplinary action is taken. The Iowa Supreme Court has held that an employer may not “benefit from an unauthorized drug test by relying on it as a basis to disqualify an employee from unemployment compensation benefits.” Eaton v. Iowa Employment Appeal Board, 602 N.W.2d at 558.

The employer failed to give the claimant notice of the test results according to the strict and explicit statutory requirements. The employer cannot prove that the claimant was terminated after she was given notice of the results of the testing. Benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The representative's November 18, 2004 decision (reference 01) is affirmed. The claimant was discharged. Misconduct has not been established. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

bas/pjs