

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**VALERIE S VINCENT**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 09A-UI-04390-LT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**PILOT TRAVEL CENTERS LLC**  
Employer

**Original Claim: 02/01/09  
Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)a – Discharge for Misconduct  
Iowa Code § 96.5(1) – Voluntary Leaving

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed a timely appeal from the March 9, 2009, reference 02, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a telephone conference hearing was held on April 14, 2009. Claimant did not respond to the hearing notice instructions and did not participate. Employer participated through Matt Krile.

**ISSUE:**

The issue is whether claimant quit the employment without good cause attributable to the employer or if she was discharged for reasons related to job misconduct sufficient to warrant a denial of unemployment benefits.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having heard the testimony and having reviewed the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant most recently worked full-time as a shift supervisor and was employed until January 30, 2009, when she was discharged. She worked in the Urbandale, Iowa, location and met with then manager Scott Miller, who told her the employer was reorganizing and changing job titles and adding responsibilities with a raise and annual bonus. He could or would not tell her how much the raise would be, so she declined to sign the document for a new title and additional responsibilities. Miller asked her if she was accepting the new job and she said she would remain a team leader or cashier. Miller asked her to turn in her keys; she asked him if she was being fired and he said “yes.” Miller is no longer an employee. She left the meeting crying and Miller claimed she had resigned to move with her then future husband to Indiana. He lived in Omaha and moved to Des Moines to live with her. Claimant’s address of record reflects an address in Des Moines. Employer cannot produce the alleged resignation letter.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes claimant did not quit but was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason.

Iowa Code § 96.5-1 provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

1. Voluntary quitting. If the individual has left work voluntarily without good cause attributable to the individual's employer, if so found by the department.

871 IAC 24.26(21) provides:

Voluntary quit with good cause attributable to the employer and separations not considered to be voluntary quits. The following are reasons for a claimant leaving employment with good cause attributable to the employer:

(21) The claimant was compelled to resign when given the choice of resigning or being discharged. This shall not be considered a voluntary leaving.

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.

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.

A voluntary leaving of employment requires an intention to terminate the employment relationship accompanied by an overt act of carrying out that intention. *Local Lodge #1426 v. Wilson Trailer*, 289 N.W.2d 608, 612 (Iowa 1980).

Claimant's expression of her dissatisfaction with employer's failure to put the claimed raise in writing before she accepted a job with more responsibilities was not a resignation, and there is no credible evidence claimant ever intended to resign to move to Indiana or Nebraska or for any other reason. Miller's overreaction by ending claimant's employment was a discharge, not a voluntary leaving of employment.

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The issue is not whether the employer made a correct decision in separating claimant, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. IDJS*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa App. 1984). What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what misconduct warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. *Pierce v. IDJS*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa App. 1988). Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. Such misconduct must be "substantial." When based on carelessness, the carelessness must actually indicate a "wrongful intent" to be disqualifying in nature. *Newman v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa App. 1984). Poor work performance is not misconduct in the absence of evidence of intent. *Miller v. Employment Appeal Board*, 423 N.W.2d 211 (Iowa App. 1988).

An employer may discharge an employee for any number of reasons or no reason at all if it is not contrary to public policy, but if it fails to meet its burden of proof to establish job-related misconduct as the reason for the separation, employer incurs potential liability for unemployment insurance benefits related to that separation. Inasmuch as claimant simply wanted assurance of a specific raise in writing, employer has not met the burden of proof to establish that claimant engaged in misconduct. Benefits are allowed.

**DECISION:**

The March 9, 2009, reference 02, decision is affirmed. Claimant did not quit but 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

dml/kjw