

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

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CHECK INTO CASH OF IOWA INC
C/o THOMAS & THORNGREN INC
PO BOX 280100
NASHVILLE TN 37228

Appeal Number: 06A-UI-01732-LT
OC: 01-15-06 R: 02
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)

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Employer filed a timely appeal from the February 2, 2006, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on March 1, 2006. Claimant did respond to the hearing notice instructions but was not available when the hearing was called and did not participate. Employer did participate through Bill Rankin, district manager. The administrative law judge took judicial notice of the administrative record.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: Claimant was employed as a full-time assistant manager from July 25, 2005 through January 17, 2006 when she was discharged. On January 16 claimant called Rankin, district manager since

December 2005, and was crying and upset after having been threatened by a customer's brother during a collection call to an inactive customer. Rankin laughed at her and told her to calm down. Employer had recently increased the inactive call quota from zero to 25 to 50 inactive calls per day. Claimant hung up on Rankin who called her back and told her to leave the store. Claimant spoke to store manager, Chuck, on January 18 who told her she was no longer employed there.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

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

Iowa Code section 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.

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 testimony is credible given employer's conflicting statements in the protest (claimant quit without a reason) and the hearing testimony (claimant quit because of the added inactive calls and customer threat saying "no job is worth this"). However, claimant did not quit her job but was fired after she hung up on Rankin. While claimant may have threatened to quit in the past, she did not follow through then or on January 16, 2006. She did attempt to retain her employment by speaking with the store manager two days later. Thus, claimant did not quit but was discharged from her employment.

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).

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6, 11 (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, 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. Although claimant acted imprudently by hanging up on employer, it was reasonable given the circumstances of Rankin laughing at her distress after a customer's brother called and threatened her. Inasmuch as employer had not previously warned claimant about the isolated issue leading to the separation, it has not met the burden of proof to establish that claimant acted deliberately or negligently in violation of company policy, procedure, or prior warning. If an employer expects an employee to conform to certain expectations or face discharge, appropriate (preferably written), detailed, and reasonable notice should be given. Benefits are allowed.

DECISION:

The February 2, 2006, reference 01, decision is affirmed. Claimant was discharged from employment for no disqualifying reason. Benefits are allowed, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

dml/kkf