

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

WILLIAM J WRIGHT
511 – 9TH ST NW
CEDAR RAPIDS IA 52405

LABOR READY MIDWEST INC
C/O TALX UC EXPRESS
PO BOX 283
ST LOUIS MO 63166-0283

Appeal Number: 05A-UI-01682-DT
OC: 01/09/05 R: 03
Claimant: Respondent (2)

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
871 IAC 24.32(9) – Suspension or disciplinary layoff
Section 96.3-7 – Recovery of Overpayment of Benefits

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Labor Ready Midwest, Inc. (employer) appealed a representative's February 2, 2005 decision (reference 02) that concluded William J. Wright (claimant) was qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits after a separation from employment. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on March 7, 2005. The claimant participated in the hearing. James Deromedia appeared on the employer's behalf and presented testimony from one other witness, Rebecca Dripps. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the parties, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUE:

Was there a permanent or temporary disqualifying separation from employment either through a voluntary quit without good cause attributable to the employer or through a discharge or suspension for misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The employer is a temporary employment firm. The claimant began taking assignments with the employer on November 16, 2004. His most recent assignment began on December 6, 2004. His last day on the assignment was December 15, 2004. He worked full time as a laborer at the employer's business client. The claimant was scheduled to return to the business client for a shift on December 16, 2004. However, he did not report to the employer that morning in time to pick up his work ticket for the day on the assignment, and so someone else was sent in his place. He came in later and reported to Ms. Dripps, the employer's customer representative, that he had been sick, but the employer indicated he could not then go out to the business client. The claimant became upset, and began cursing and using foul language to Ms. Dripps. She warned him to stop, but when he continued, she informed him that he was being suspended for 90 days. He then said, "this is b - - - s - - -" and left.

The claimant established a claim for unemployment insurance benefits effective January 9, 2005. The claimant has received unemployment insurance benefits after the separation from employment in the amount of \$2,170.00.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue in this case is whether the employer discharged or suspended the claimant for reasons establishing work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law. The issue is not whether the employer was right to terminate or suspend the claimant's employment, 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 or suspension of an employee and what is misconduct that warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. Pierce v. IDJS, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa App. 1988).

A claimant is not qualified to receive unemployment insurance benefits if an employer has discharged or suspended the claimant for reasons constituting work-connected misconduct. Iowa Code section 96.5-2-a. Before a claimant can be denied unemployment insurance benefits, the employer has the burden to establish the claimant was discharged or suspended for work-connected misconduct. Cosper v. IDJS, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982); Iowa Code §96.5-2-a.

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).

871 IAC 24.32(9) provides:

(9) Suspension or disciplinary layoff. Whenever a claim is filed and the reason for the claimant's unemployment is the result of a disciplinary layoff or suspension imposed by the employer, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct must be resolved. Alleged misconduct or dishonesty without corroboration is not sufficient to result in disqualification.

The use of profanity or offensive language in a confrontational, disrespectful, or name-calling context may be recognized as misconduct, even in the case of isolated incidents. Myers v. Employment Appeal Board, 462 N.W.2d 734, 738 (Iowa App. 1990). The claimant's cursing and foul language toward Ms. Dripps shows a willful or wanton disregard of the standard of behavior the employer has the right to expect from an employee, as well as an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests and of the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. The employer suspended the claimant for reasons amounting to work-connected misconduct.

Iowa Code section 96.3-7 provides:

7. Recovery of overpayment of benefits. If an individual receives benefits for which the individual is subsequently determined to be ineligible, even though the individual acts in good faith and is not otherwise at fault, the benefits shall be recovered. The department in its discretion may recover the overpayment of benefits either by having a sum equal to the overpayment deducted from any future benefits payable to the individual or by having the individual pay to the department a sum equal to the overpayment.

If the department determines that an overpayment has been made, the charge for the overpayment against the employer's account shall be removed and the account shall be credited with an amount equal to the overpayment from the unemployment compensation trust fund and this credit shall include both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

Because the claimant's separation was disqualifying, benefits were paid to which the claimant was not entitled. Those benefits must be recovered in accordance with the provisions of Iowa law.

DECISION:

The representative's February 2, 2005 decision (reference 02) is reversed. The employer discharged the claimant for disqualifying reasons. The claimant is disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits as of December 17, 2004. This disqualification continues until the claimant has been paid ten times his weekly benefit amount for insured work, provided he is otherwise eligible. The employer's account will not be charged. The claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$2,170.00.

ld/pjs