

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

MICHAEL HOARD
Claimant

HY-VEE INC
Employer

APPEAL 15A-UI-08132-SCT
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION

OC: 06/28/15
Claimant: Appellant (6)

Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant/appellant filed an appeal from the July 15, 2015, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision that concluded claimant was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits after a separation from employment. Notices of hearing were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record for a telephone hearing scheduled for August 10, 2015. A review of the Appeals Bureau's conference call system indicates that the appellant was not available at the telephone number provided for the scheduled hearing and no hearing was held. At approximately 9:50 a.m., the appellant called in to the IWD Appeals Bureau, after the hearing record was closed.

ISSUES:

Should the hearing record be reopened?

Should the appeal be dismissed based on the appellant's failure to appear and participate?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The parties were properly notified of the scheduled hearing for this appeal. The appellant was not available at the telephone number provided for the scheduled hearing and did not participate or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice. Official notice of the Clear2there hearing control screen is taken to establish that appellant did not answer when called at the number provided at registration.

At approximately 9:50 a.m., almost a full half-hour after the hearing was scheduled to begin, the appellant, called into the IWD Appeals Bureau office regarding his hearing. He explained he called in late because he had just awoken and his phone was on vibrate so he did not hear the phone call.

The hearing notice instruction specifically advises parties:

**Immediately register your phone number online or by calling one of the numbers
provided below for a telephone hearing scheduled for:**

Date: MON AUG 10, 2015
Iowa Time: 9:30 AM

The judge will not call you on the day of the hearing if you have not registered your phone number with the Appeals Bureau in Des Moines, Iowa as instructed below.

The back page of the hearing notice provides further instruction and warning:

If you do not participate in the hearing because you do not register for the hearing, register late, or cannot be reached at the number you provided when the judge calls for the hearing, the appeal may be dismissed or decided based on other available evidence. **The judge will not call you unless you register online or by phone before the hearing and give your phone number to the Appeals Bureau as instructed on the front side of this notice.** This is true even if agency representatives previously contacted you directly or you provided your phone number on some written documentation.

As a courtesy to the appellant the record was left open for a minimum of 15 minutes after the hearing start time to give the appellant a reasonable opportunity to participate. This reasonable amount of time is appropriate because if a hearing were conducted with the non-appealing party alone it would have likely concluded in 15 minutes or less. Allowing additional time would prejudice the non-appealing party for appearing in a timely manner. The 15-minute wait time is also a reasonable period to hold the record open as insufficient time would remain to conduct a quality due process hearing in the time allotted by the Appeals Bureau. Each two-party hearing is allowed 60 minutes and a one-party hearing allowed 30 minutes. Holding the appellant in default for failure to appear and participate during a 15-minute window after the hearing start time is entirely reasonable considering the time allocated for unemployment hearings.

The representative's decision had concluded that the claimant was not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The Iowa Administrative Procedures Act at Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) provides in pertinent part:

If a party fails to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding after proper service of notice, the presiding officer may, if no adjournment is granted, enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party. ... If a decision is rendered against a party who failed to appear for the hearing and the presiding officer is timely requested by that party to vacate the decision for good cause, the time for initiating a further appeal is stayed pending a determination by the presiding officer to grant or deny the request. If adequate reasons are provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall vacate the decision and, after proper service of notice, conduct another evidentiary hearing. **If adequate reasons are not provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer *shall deny* the motion to vacate.**

The Agency rules at Iowa Admin. Code r. 26.14(7) provide:

If a party has not responded to a notice of telephone hearing by providing the appeals bureau with the names and telephone numbers of the persons who are participating in the hearing **by the scheduled starting time of the hearing** or is not available at the

telephone number provided, the presiding officer may proceed with the hearing. If the appealing party fails to provide a telephone number or is unavailable for the hearing, the presiding officer may decide the appealing party is in default and dismiss the appeal as provided in Iowa Code § 17A.12(3). The record may be reopened if the absent party makes a request to reopen the hearing under subrule 26.8(3) and shows good cause for reopening the hearing.

a. If an absent party responds to the hearing notice while the hearing is in progress, the presiding officer shall pause to admit the party, summarize the hearing to that point, administer the oath, and resume the hearing.

b. If a party responds to the notice of hearing after the record has been closed and any party which has participated is no longer on the telephone line, the presiding officer shall not take the evidence of the late party. Instead, the presiding officer shall inquire ex parte as to why the party was late in responding to the notice of hearing. For good cause shown, the presiding officer shall reopen the record and cause further notice of hearing to be issued to all parties of record. **The record shall not be reopened if the presiding officer does not find good cause for the party's late response to the notice of hearing.**

c. **Failure to read or follow the instructions on the notice of hearing shall not constitute good cause for reopening the record.** (Emphasis added.)

The Iowa Supreme Court has opined that a default should not be set aside for ordinary negligence or want of ordinary care. Defaults should not be set aside where the movant ignores plain mandates with ample opportunity to abide. See *Houlihan v. Emp't Appeal Bd.*, 545 N.W.2d 863 (Iowa 1996). Here the first plain mandate is to read the hearing notice and register a telephone number where the party can be reached for the hearing. The second plain mandate is to be available at the number provided at the date and time of the hearing. Due process requires notice and an opportunity to be heard, both of which were provided to the parties. This rule does not provide exceptions for good intentions and/or a party contacting the Appeals Bureau within a reasonable amount of time after the hearing is scheduled. It can be assumed an appellant intends to participate in the hearing simply by the fact an appeal is filed, but their responsibility does not end there and all parties are required to follow the specific written instructions printed on the hearing notice. The appellant filed the appeal and is held responsible for going forward with the case in an expeditious and deliberate manner. The rule holds appellant in default if not present at the start of hearing. As a courtesy, appellant was granted additional time not required by statute or rule. Here, notwithstanding additional time, notice and opportunity, the appellant failed to prosecute the case promptly and as such the appellant is in default. Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 24.14(7).

The appellant has not shown good cause to reopen the record. Oversleeping or missing a phone call as the ringer was silenced shows want of ordinary care. The appellant knew the hearing was scheduled for 9:30 a.m., as he registered for it, and has the responsibility of being available at the phone number which he provided. The representative's decision remains in force and effect. The appellant has the option to appeal the decision directly to the Employment Appeal Board, whose address is listed at the top right caption.

DECISION:

The appellant is in default and the appeal is dismissed. The record shall not be reopened. The July 15, 2015, (reference 01) unemployment insurance decision denying benefits remains in effect as the appellant is in default and the appeal is dismissed.

Stephanie R. Callahan
Administrative Law Judge
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau
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Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209
Fax 515-478-3528

Decision Dated and Mailed

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