

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

MONTE J PRUITT
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 12A-UI-14398-S2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

MATRIX METALS
Employer

OC: 04/01/12
Claimant: Appellant (2)

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Monte Pruitt (claimant) appealed a representative's November 15, 2012 decision (reference 01) that concluded he was not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits because he voluntarily quit work with Matrix Metals (employer). After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was scheduled for January 9, 2013. The claimant participated personally. The employer participated by Brittany Wear, Human Resources Clerk. The claimant offered and Exhibit A was received into evidence.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the claimant was separated from employment for any disqualifying reason.

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 February 1, 2007, as a full-time production worker. The employer does not remember issuing the claimant any warnings during his employment. On October 6, 2012, the claimant was admitted to the hospital in a coma. He regained consciousness and was released on October 10, 2012. His physician provided him with a note of the dates of his hospital stay and that he was not to return to work until October 15, 2012. On October 11, 2012, the claimant found a ride to the employer and took the note to the human resources department. He told the employer that he had been in a coma. The employer terminated him for not reporting his absence.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was not discharged for misconduct.

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.

871 IAC 24.32(8) provides:

(8) Past acts of misconduct. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. Excessive absences are not misconduct unless unexcused. Absences due to properly reported illness can never constitute job misconduct since they are not volitional. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). Unreported absences do not constitute job misconduct if the failure to report is caused by mental incapacity. Roberts v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 356 N.W.2d 218 (Iowa 1984). The employer must establish not only misconduct but that there was a final incident of misconduct which precipitated the discharge. The last incident of absence was an improperly reported illness. The claimant's absence does not amount to job misconduct because the claimant could not properly report his absence due to a coma. The employer has failed to provide any evidence of willful and deliberate misconduct which would be a final incident leading to the discharge. The claimant was discharged but there was no misconduct.

DECISION:

The representative's November 15, 2012 decision (reference 01) is reversed. The employer has not met its proof to establish job related misconduct. Benefits are allowed.

Beth A. Scheetz
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

bas/pjs