

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**ROBERT L THEULEN**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 10A-UCFE-00042-MT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**US POSTAL SERVICE**  
Employer

**OC: 08/01/10**  
**Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Employer filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated September 22, 2010, reference 01, which held claimant eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a telephone conference hearing was scheduled for and held on November 16, 2010. Claimant participated personally and was represented by Christopher Polking, Attorney at Law with witness Bruce Clark. Employer participated by Angie Pettinger, Labor Relations Specialist. Exhibits A and One were admitted into evidence.

**ISSUE:**

The issue in this matter is whether claimant was discharged for misconduct.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for employer on July 27, 2010.

Claimant was discharged on July 27, 2010 by employer because claimant allegedly took a gift card from the mail. Employer planted a gift card in a mail box. Claimant did end up with the gift card and used it for purchases at Wal-Mart. Claimant has many gift cards in his possession. Claimant could not remember how he came into possession of the gift card. Claimant understood the policy that taking anything from the mail would result in discharge. Employer had a photo from Wal-Mart on June 24, 2010 of the person who used the card. The photograph was of claimant. Employer was aware of the identity of the user June 24, 2010 but took no action to identify the card's user until July 27, 2010.

**REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

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.

871 IAC 24.32(4) provides:

(4) Report required. The claimant's statement and the employer's statement must give detailed facts as to the specific reason for the claimant's discharge. Allegations of misconduct or dishonesty without additional evidence shall not be sufficient to result in disqualification. If the employer is unwilling to furnish available evidence to corroborate the allegation, misconduct cannot be established. In cases where a suspension or disciplinary layoff exists, the claimant is considered as discharged, and the issue of misconduct shall be resolved.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. The lack of a current warning may detract from a finding of an intentional policy violation.

In this matter, the evidence fails to establish that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning taking items from the mail. Claimant was warned concerning this policy.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, fails to constitute misconduct because there is no current act that can be identified as misconduct. The incident is too stale to constitute a current act of misconduct. The month long delay in acting on the violation is just too long for this to qualify as a current act of misconduct. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was not discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is not disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

**DECISION:**

The decision of the representative dated September 22, 2010, reference 01, is affirmed. Claimant is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits, provided claimant meets all other eligibility requirements.

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Marlon Mormann  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

mdm/css