

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

AMIE L STEVENS

Claimant

WELLS FARGO BANK NA

Employer

APPEAL NO. 17A-UI-04751-B2T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

OC: 04/16/17

Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code § 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Claimant filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated May 2, 2017, reference 01, which held claimant ineligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on May 23, 2017. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Tony Gabriel with hearing representative Marcy Schneider. Employer's Exhibits 1-5 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 April 14, 2017. Employer discharged claimant on April 14, 2017 because of claimant's tardiness after receiving multiple warnings.

Claimant received an informal warning for tardiness on February 15, 2017, and a formal warning for punctuality on April 4, 2017. The formal warning included mention of claimant being late coming to work and taking an extended lunch period.

Claimant's lunch was to be for 30 minutes. Claimant's last, most recent act of tardiness occurred on April 10, 2017 when claimant went to lunch at 12:00 pm and returned from lunch at 12:36 pm. Claimant was told at the time of her formal warning that there is a five minute grace period allowed for lunches. Claimant stated that she looked at the clock in the break room during her lunch and saw that it was at 12:33 pm at the time she left the break room to return to her desk. Claimant was surprised to find out the clock in the break room was three minutes fast. Employer denied that the clock was fast.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code § 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.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.32(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 Dep't of Job Serv.*, 275 N.W.2d 445, 448 (Iowa 1979).

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

In order to establish misconduct as to disqualify a former employee from benefits an employer must establish the employee was responsible for a deliberate act or omission which was a material breach of the duties and obligations owed by the employee to the employer. Rule 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; *Huntoon v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 275 N.W.2d 445 (Iowa 1979); *Henry v. Iowa Department of Job Service*, 391 N.W.2d 731, 735 (Iowa Ct. App. 1986). The conduct must show a 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 the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. Rule 871 IAC 24.32(1)a; *Huntoon* supra; *Henry* supra.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. In this matter, the evidence established that claimant was

discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning tardiness. Claimant was warned concerning this policy.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, constitutes misconduct because claimant admitted to being six minutes late in returning from lunch after receiving repeated warnings. Claimant's argument about the break room clock being off cannot be successful as claimant left the break room after taking a lunch over her allowed thirty minutes. The five minute break period was created not so that someone would have a thirty-five minute lunch, but rather to allow for small errors on the part of employee. Employee admitted she didn't even leave the break room until after the time she was to return from lunch. Irrespective of whether the clock in the break room was correct, claimant planned on being late to return to her work station after repeated warnings. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

DECISION:

The decision of the representative dated May 2, 2017, reference 01, is affirmed. Unemployment insurance benefits shall be withheld until claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times claimant's weekly benefit amount, provided claimant is otherwise eligible.

Blair A. Bennett
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

bab/scn