

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

MARQUS J MITCHELL
2635B NEWBURY CTR
BURLINGTON IA 52601

TYSON FRESH MEATS INC
C/O TALX – UC EXPRESS
PO BOX 283
ST LOUIS MO 63166-0283

Appeal Number: 05A-UI-08200-SWT
OC: 07/17/05 R: 04
Claimant: Appellant (1)

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

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated August 8, 2005, reference 01, that concluded he was discharged for work-connected misconduct. A telephone hearing was held on August 25, 2005. The parties were properly notified about the hearing. The claimant participated in the hearing. Kris Travis participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The claimant worked full time for the employer as a production labor from December 9, 2003, to July 17, 2005. The claimant was informed and understood that under the employer's work rules, any fighting on company property was grounds for immediate discharge.

On July 15, 2005, an employee who appeared to be intoxicated walked up behind the claimant and began yelling at him. The claimant had problems with the same employee the day before. When the claimant told the employee to back away and leave him alone, the employee threw a ham that he had in his hand at the claimant. The claimant deflected the ham with his hand. At that point, both the claimant and the employee began punching and kicking at each other. Eventually, the employee fell to the floor and the claimant kicked the employee while he was on the ground. As a result of the fight, the employee required hospitalization.

On July 17, 2005, the employer discharged the claimant for violating the employer's work rule prohibiting fighting on company policy.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue in this case is whether the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance 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.

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).

The claimant's violation of a known work rule was a willful and material breach of the duties and obligations to the employer and a substantial disregard of the standards of behavior the employer had the right to expect of the claimant. The claimant went beyond defending himself from an aggressor. He had the option to back away and report the employee's actions to management, but instead he began kicking and punching the coworker, even after the coworker was on the floor. Work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law has been established in this case.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated August 8, 2005, reference 01, is affirmed. The claimant is disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits until he has been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible.

saw/pjs