

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

MATTHEW RIFFEY
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 07A-UI-02246-ET

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

INTERBAKE FOODS
Employer

**OC: 01-14-07 R: 01
Claimant: Appellant (1)**

Section 96.6-2 - Timeliness of Appeal

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The claimant appealed from the February 14, 2007, reference 01, decision that denied benefits. After due notice was issued, a hearing was scheduled by telephone conference call before Administrative Law Judge Julie Elder on March 21, 2007. The claimant provided a phone number prior to the hearing but was not available at that number at the time of the 9:30 a.m. hearing and did not participate in the hearing. He called the Appeal Section at 9:49 a.m. and stated he thought the hearing was at 9:15 a.m. He had not followed the instructions to be available at 9:30 a.m. and did not follow the directions given by the Appeals Section to call in within five minutes of the start time of the hearing if not called by that time. Consequently, no hearing was held in this matter. Department's Exhibit D-1 was admitted to the record.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the claimant's appeal is timely.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: A disqualification decision was mailed to the claimant's last-known address of record on February 14, 2007. The claimant received the decision. The decision contained a warning that an appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeals Section by February 24, 2007. That date fell on a Saturday so the appeal was due February 26, 2007. The appeal was not filed until March 5, 2007, which is after the date noticed on the disqualification decision. The claimant indicated in his appeal letter that he is separating from his wife and only gets his mail twice a week and when he did receive his mail from Iowa Workforce Development, "I do not have a very clear understanding of how the process works. I read the statements and I don't know what I am supposed to do." (Department's Exhibit D-1).

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.6-2 provides:

2. Initial determination. A representative designated by the director shall promptly notify all interested parties to the claim of its filing, and the parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of the filing of the claim by ordinary mail to the last known address to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. The claimant has the burden of proving that the claimant meets the basic eligibility conditions of section 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to section 96.5, except as provided by this subsection. The claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence showing that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsection 10, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to section 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraphs "a" through "h". Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision. If an administrative law judge affirms a decision of the representative, or the appeal board affirms a decision of the administrative law judge allowing benefits, the benefits shall be paid regardless of any appeal which is thereafter taken, but if the decision is finally reversed, no employer's account shall be charged with benefits so paid and this relief from charges shall apply to both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

The ten calendar days for appeal begins running on the mailing date. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev., 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); Johnson v. Board of Adjustment, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

Pursuant to rules 871 IAC 26.2(96)(1) and 871 IAC 24.35(96)(1), appeals are considered filed when postmarked, if mailed. Messina v. IDJS, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983).

The record in this case shows that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. Franklin v. IDJS, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. Beardslee v. IDJS, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also In re Appeal of Elliott, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). The question in this case thus becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. Hendren v. IESC, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); Smith v. IESC, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973). The claimant had at least three opportunities to pick up his mail between the time the representative's decision was mailed and the time his appeal was due. Additionally, if he did

not understand the process as explained in the representative's decision he should have contacted his local workforce office for an explanation and instructions on how to proceed. Consequently, the record shows that the appellant did have a reasonable opportunity to file a timely appeal.

The administrative law judge concludes that failure to file a timely appeal within the time prescribed by the Iowa Employment Security Law was not due to any Agency error or misinformation or delay or other action of the United States Postal Service pursuant to 871 IAC 24.35(2). The administrative law judge further concludes that the appeal was not timely filed pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6-2, and the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to make a determination with respect to the nature of the appeal. See, Beardslee v. IDJS, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and Franklin v. IDJS, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979).

DECISION:

The February 14, 2007, reference 01, decision is affirmed. The appeal in this case was not timely, and the decision of the representative remains in effect. Benefits are withheld until such time as the claimant has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible.

Julie Elder
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

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