

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**ERIC JAMES**

Claimant

**APPEAL NO: 14A-UI-11349-ET**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**LOVES TRAVEL STOPS AND COUNTRY**

Employer

**OC: 10/05/14**

**Claimant: Respondent (2)**

Iowa Code Section 96.5(1)d – Voluntary Leaving/Illness or Injury  
871 IAC 24.25(35) – Separation Due to Illness or Injury

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

The employer filed a timely appeal from the October 24, 2014, reference 01, decision that allowed benefits to the claimant. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held by telephone conference call before Administrative Law Judge Julie Elder on November 20, 2014. The claimant participated in the hearing. Scott Bahrns, General Manager and Matt Edwards, District Manager, participated in the hearing on behalf of the employer.

**ISSUE:**

The issues are whether the claimant voluntarily left his position due to a non-work-related injury or illness and whether he is overpaid benefits.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds: The claimant was employed as a full-time tire technician for Love's Travel Stops and Country Store from February 12, 2013 to October 3, 2014. He suffered a non-work-related medical situation and was unable to drive pursuant to medical advice from a treating physician and the DOT. He has not yet received a full medical release from the treating physician allowing him to receive his driver's license.

The claimant was shot four times in July 2012. He experienced a mass on the back of his neck which caused him to black out while driving in approximately August 2014. He underwent surgery in August 2014. As a result his physician and the DOT would not allow him to drive, which was an essential function of his job as a tire tech because he performed road service calls and could no longer do that. He will not be released to drive until mid-January 2015.

The claimant notified the employer of his situation and continued to update him throughout his absence. The employer offered him different positions in the store at the same pay and hours until he could return to his job as a tire tech but the claimant declined the offer because he does not think he is a "people person."

The claimant has claimed and received unemployment insurance benefits in the amount of \$1,490.00 since his separation from this employer.

The employer participated personally in the fact-finding interview through the statements of Brandon Peters.

### **REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:**

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant is temporarily separated from his employment without good cause attributable to the employer.

Iowa Code § 96.5-1-d provides:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits:

1. Voluntary quitting. If the individual has left work voluntarily without good cause attributable to the individual's employer, if so found by the department. But the individual shall not be disqualified if the department finds that:

d. The individual left employment because of illness, injury or pregnancy upon the advice of a licensed and practicing physician, and upon knowledge of the necessity for absence immediately notified the employer, or the employer consented to the absence, and after recovering from the illness, injury or pregnancy, when recovery was certified by a licensed and practicing physician, the individual returned to the employer and offered to perform services and the individual's regular work or comparable suitable work was not available, if so found by the department, provided the individual is otherwise eligible.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.25(35) provides:

Voluntary quit without good cause. In general, a voluntary quit means discontinuing the employment because the employee no longer desires to remain in the relationship of an employee with the employer from whom the employee has separated. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.5. However, the claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving Iowa Code section 96.5, subsection (1), paragraphs "a" through "i," and subsection 10. The following reasons for a voluntary quit shall be presumed to be without good cause attributable to the employer:

(35) The claimant left because of illness or injury which was not caused or aggravated by the employment or pregnancy and failed to:

- (a) Obtain the advice of a licensed and practicing physician;
- (b) Obtain certification of release for work from a licensed and practicing physician;
- (c) Return to the employer and offer services upon recovery and certification for work by a licensed and practicing physician; or
- (d) Fully recover so that the claimant could perform all of the duties of the job.

The claimant is not working because he lost his driver's license due to a medical condition and cannot perform the essential functions of his job until his license is returned. The claimant has not been released to return to full work duties, which includes driving, and the employer is not obligated to accommodate a non-work-related medical condition. Accordingly, the separation is without good cause attributable to the employer and benefits must be denied.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 provides:

Employer and employer representative participation in fact-finding interviews.

(1) "Participate," as the term is used for employers in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means submitting detailed factual information of the quantity and quality that if un rebutted would be sufficient to result in a decision favorable to the employer. The most effective means to participate is to provide live testimony at the interview from a witness with firsthand knowledge of the events leading to the separation. If no live testimony is provided, the employer must provide the name and telephone number of an employee with firsthand information who may be contacted, if necessary, for rebuttal. A party may also participate by providing detailed written statements or documents that provide detailed factual information of the events leading to separation. At a minimum, the information provided by the employer or the employer's representative must identify the dates and particular circumstances of the incident or incidents, including, in the case of discharge, the act or omissions of the claimant or, in the event of a voluntary separation, the stated reason for the quit. The specific rule or policy must be submitted if the claimant was discharged for violating such rule or policy. In the case of discharge for attendance violations, the information must include the circumstances of all incidents the employer or the employer's representative contends meet the definition of unexcused absences as set forth in 871—subrule 24.32(7). On the other hand, written or oral statements or general conclusions without supporting detailed factual information and information submitted after the fact-finding decision has been issued are not considered participation within the meaning of the statute.

(2) "A continuous pattern of nonparticipation in the initial determination to award benefits," pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, as the term is used for an entity representing employers, means on 25 or more occasions in a calendar quarter beginning with the first calendar quarter of 2009, the entity files appeals after failing to participate. Appeals filed but withdrawn before the day of the contested case hearing will not be considered in determining if a continuous pattern of nonparticipation exists. The division administrator shall notify the employer's representative in writing after each such appeal.

(3) If the division administrator finds that an entity representing employers as defined in Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, has engaged in a continuous pattern of nonparticipation, the division administrator shall suspend said representative for a period of up to six months on the first occasion, up to one year on the second occasion and up to ten years on the third or subsequent occasion. Suspension by the division administrator constitutes final agency action and may be appealed pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.19.

(4) "Fraud or willful misrepresentation by the individual," as the term is used for claimants in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means providing knowingly false statements or

knowingly false denials of material facts for the purpose of obtaining unemployment insurance benefits. Statements or denials may be either oral or written by the claimant. Inadvertent misstatements or mistakes made in good faith are not considered fraud or willful misrepresentation.

This rule is intended to implement Iowa Code section 96.3(7)“b” as amended by 2008 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2160.

The unemployment insurance law requires benefits be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later denied benefits even if the claimant acted in good faith and was not at fault. However, a claimant will not have to repay an overpayment when an initial decision to award benefits on an employment separation issue is reversed on appeal if two conditions are met: (1) the claimant did not receive the benefits due to fraud or willful misrepresentation, and (2) the employer failed to participate in the initial proceeding that awarded benefits. In addition, if a claimant is not required to repay an overpayment because the employer failed to participate in the initial proceeding, the employer's account will be charged for the overpaid benefits. Iowa Code § 96.3-7-a, -b.

The claimant received benefits but has been denied benefits as a result of this decision. The claimant, therefore, was overpaid benefits.

Because the employer participated in the fact-finding interview, the claimant is required to repay the overpayment and the employer will not be charged for benefits paid.

The unemployment insurance law provides that benefits must be recovered from a claimant who receives benefits and is later determined to be ineligible for benefits, even though the claimant acted in good faith and was not otherwise at fault. However, the overpayment will not be recovered when it is based on a reversal on appeal of an initial determination to award benefits on an issue regarding the claimant's employment separation if: (1) the benefits were not received due to any fraud or willful misrepresentation by the claimant and (2) the employer did not participate in the initial proceeding to award benefits. In this case, the claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits. While there is no evidence the claimant received benefits due to fraud or willful misrepresentation, the employer participated in the fact-finding interview personally through the statements of Brandon Peters. Consequently, the claimant's overpayment of benefits cannot be waived and he is overpaid benefits in the amount of \$1,490.00.

#### **DECISION:**

The October 24, 2014, reference 01, decision is reversed. The claimant's separation was without good cause attributable to the employer. Benefits are withheld until such time as the claimant works in and has been paid wages equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount,

provided he is otherwise eligible or until such time as the claimant obtains a full release without restriction to return to regular duties, offers services to the employer, and the employer has no comparable, suitable work available. The claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits. Therefore, the claimant is overpaid benefits in the amount of 1,490.00.

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Julie Elder  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

je/pjs