

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

MICHAEL K LOFTON
Claimant

APPEAL NO: 15A-UI-08439-JTT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

AADG INC
Employer

OC: 06/14/15
Claimant: Respondent (6)

Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) – Default Decision
Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) – Dismissal of Appeal on Default

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

The employer filed an appeal from the July 16, 2015, reference 01, unemployment insurance decision that allowed benefits to the claimant provided he was otherwise eligible and that held the employer's account could be charged for benefits, based on an Agency conclusion that the claimant had been discharged on June 16, 2015 for no disqualifying reason. Notices of hearing were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record for a telephone hearing to be held at 2:00 p.m. on August 18, 2015. At the time of the hearing, employer representative Lanie Allen, Human Resources Manager, was not available at the telephone number the employer provided for the hearing and did not participate in the hearing. The claimant did not provide a telephone number for the hearing and did not participate. Based upon the employer/appellant's failure to participate in the hearing and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law and decision.

ISSUE:

Should the appeal be dismissed based upon the employer/appellant not participating in the hearing?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The parties were properly notified of the appeal hearing set for 2:00 p.m. on August 18, 2015. The hearing notice was mailed to the parties on July 30, 2015. On August 4, 2015, the employer responded to the July 30, 2015 hearing notice by listing Lanie Allen, Human Resources Manager, as the employer's witness for the hearing and by providing a telephone number where Ms. Allen could be reached for the hearing. At the time of the hearing, the administrative law judge made two attempts to reach Ms. Allen at the number the employer had provided. On both attempts, the administrative law judge's call was eventually routed to a voice mailbox. The pre-recorded message at that voicemail box indicated that it belonged to "Lanie." The administrative law judge left two messages for Ms. Allen. Neither Ms. Allen nor anyone else responded to those messages or otherwise contacted the Appeals Section to indicate that the employer was available for the hearing. The employer/appellant did not participate in the hearing or request a postponement of the hearing as required by the hearing notice.

The July 16, 2015, reference 01, unemployment insurance decision allowed benefits to the claimant provided he was otherwise eligible and held the employer's account could be charged for benefits, based on an Agency conclusion that the claimant had been discharged on June 16, 2015 for no disqualifying reason.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The Iowa Administrative Procedures Act at Iowa Code § 17A.12(3) provides in pertinent part:

If a party fails to appear or participate in a contested case proceeding after proper service of notice, the presiding officer may, if no adjournment is granted, enter a default decision or proceed with the hearing and make a decision in the absence of the party. ... If a decision is rendered against a party who failed to appear for the hearing and the presiding officer is timely requested by that party to vacate the decision for good cause, the time for initiating a further appeal is stayed pending a determination by the presiding officer to grant or deny the request. If adequate reasons are provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall vacate the decision and, after proper service of notice, conduct another evidentiary hearing. If adequate reasons are not provided showing good cause for the party's failure to appear, the presiding officer shall deny the motion to vacate.

The Agency rules at Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-26.14(7) provide:

If a party has not responded to a notice of telephone hearing by providing the appeals bureau with the names and telephone numbers of the persons who are participating in the hearing by the scheduled starting time of the hearing or is not available at the telephone number provided, the presiding officer may proceed with the hearing. If the appealing party fails to provide a telephone number or is unavailable for the hearing, the presiding officer may decide the appealing party is in default and dismiss the appeal as provided in Iowa Code section 17A.12(3). The record may be reopened if the absent party makes a request to reopen the hearing under subrule 26.8(3) and shows good cause for reopening the hearing.

- a. If an absent party responds to the hearing notice while the hearing is in progress, the presiding officer shall pause to admit the party, summarize the hearing to that point, administer the oath, and resume the hearing.
- b. If a party responds to the notice of hearing after the record has been closed and any party which has participated is no longer on the telephone line, the presiding officer shall not take the evidence of the late party. Instead, the presiding officer shall inquire ex parte as to why the party was late in responding to the notice of hearing. For good cause shown, the presiding officer shall reopen the record and cause further notice of hearing to be issued to all parties of record. The record shall not be reopened if the presiding officer does not find good cause for the party's late response to the notice of hearing.
- c. Failure to read or follow the instructions on the notice of hearing shall not constitute good cause for reopening the record.

The employer/appellant appealed the representative's decision but failed to participate in the hearing. The employer/appellant has therefore defaulted on its appeal pursuant to Iowa

Code §17A.12(3) and Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.14(7), and the representative's decision remains in force and effect.

If the appellant disagrees with this decision, pursuant to the rule, the appellant must make a written request to the administrative law judge that the hearing be reopened within 15 days after the mailing date of this decision. The written request should be mailed to the administrative law judge at the address listed at the end of this decision and must explain the emergency or other good cause that prevented the appellant from participating in the hearing at its scheduled time.

DECISION:

The July 16, 2015, reference 01, unemployment insurance decision is affirmed. The decision that allowed benefits to the claimant provided he was otherwise eligible and that held the employer's account could be charged for benefits, based on the June 16, 2015 discharge, remains in effect.

James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge
Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau
Iowa Workforce Development
1000 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0209
Fax 515-478-3528

Decision Dated and Mailed

jt/mak