

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

RALPH DAVID GOODNER
Claimant

APPEAL NO: 09A-UI-17402-BT

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

ROYSTER TRUCKING INC
Employer

OC: 10/18/09
Claimant: Respondent (2/R)

Iowa Code § 96.5(2)(a) - Discharge for Misconduct
Iowa Code § 96.3-7 - Overpayment

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Royster Trucking, Inc. (employer) appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated November 12, 2009, reference 01, which held that Ralph David Goodner (claimant) was eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After hearing notices were mailed to the parties' last-known addresses of record, a telephone hearing was held on December 29, 2009. The claimant participated in the hearing. The employer participated through Angie Powell, Office Manager. Employer's Exhibits One through Three were admitted into evidence. Based on the evidence, the arguments of the parties, and the law, the administrative law judge enters the following findings of fact, reasoning and conclusions of law, and decision.

ISSUE:

The issue is whether the employer discharged the claimant for work-related misconduct?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds that: The claimant was employed as a full-time driver from May 16, 2008 through October 17, 2009 when he was discharged for refusing loads. Although he may have been hired for a particular route, the claimant was required to fill in for other drivers pursuant to the employer's needs. He signed the driver manual receipt on May 16, 2008 which advised him that refusing a load could result in termination.

In approximately January 2009, the employer lost several of its routes from Waterloo, Iowa to Lincoln, Nebraska and this was the claimant's regular route. The employer received new contracts and needed to fulfill those contracts. However, the claimant refused loads in 2009 on February 16, February 17, February 23, March 18, and October 6. The final incident occurred on October 7, 2009 when the claimant refused to drive the shuttles from Crete to Lincoln, Nebraska. The employer had just obtained this contract and its normal driver was off work but the claimant effectively refused. Office Manager Angie Powell spoke with him and she reported the claimant also gave up his regular route that day, stating he would rather stay home. The

owner advised him on October 17, 2009 that he was fired but the claimant did not sign the paperwork until October 27, 2009.

The claimant filed a claim for unemployment insurance benefits effective October 18, 2009 and has received benefits after the separation from employment.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

The issue is whether the employer discharged the claimant for work-connected misconduct. 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.

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.

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.

The employer has the burden to prove the claimant was discharged for work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law. Cosper v. Iowa Department of Job Service, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The claimant was discharged on October 17, 2009 for refusing loads. The employer's policy clearly provides that employees can be terminated for refusing a load and the claimant signed for the employer's policies on May 16, 2008. The claimant contends that he was only hired for one route and did not have to drive any other routes but the employer witnesses affectively disputed this contention. It would be contrary to the employer's business needs not to advise every driver they are required to fill in for other

drivers when needed. So the employer's claim that the claimant was made aware of this requirement is more credible than the claimant's denial of the same. The claimant's load refusals show a willful or wanton disregard of the standard of behavior the employer has the right to expect from an employee, as well as an intentional and substantial disregard of the employer's interests and of the employee's duties and obligations to the employer. Work-connected misconduct as defined by the unemployment insurance law has been established in this case and benefits are denied.

Iowa Code § 96.3(7) 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. The overpayment recovery law was updated in 2008. See Iowa Code § 96.3(7)(b). Under the revised law, a claimant will not be required to repay an overpayment of benefits if all of the following factors are met. First, the prior award of benefits must have been made in connection with a decision regarding the claimant's separation from a particular employment. Second, the claimant must not have engaged in fraud or willful misrepresentation to obtain the benefits or in connection with the Agency's initial decision to award benefits. Third, the employer must not have participated at the initial fact-finding proceeding that resulted in the initial decision to award benefits. If Workforce Development determines there has been an overpayment of benefits, the employer will not be charged for the benefits, regardless of whether the claimant is required to repay the benefits.

Because the claimant has been deemed ineligible for benefits, any benefits the claimant has received could constitute an overpayment. Accordingly, the administrative law judge will remand the matter to the Claims Division for determination of whether there has been an overpayment, the amount of the overpayment, and whether the claimant will have to repay the benefits.

DECISION:

The unemployment insurance decision dated November 12, 2009, reference 01, is reversed. The claimant is not eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits because he was discharged from work for misconduct. Benefits are withheld until he has worked in and been paid wages for insured work equal to ten times his weekly benefit amount, provided he is otherwise eligible. The matter is remanded to the Claims Division for investigation and determination of the overpayment issue.

Susan D. Ackerman
Administrative Law Judge

Decision Dated and Mailed

sda/css