

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**JESSIE SAENZ-VALDEZ**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO. 09A-UI-07332-MT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**CARGILL MEAT SOLUTIONS  
CORPORATION**  
Employer

**OC: 04/12/09**  
**Claimant: Respondent (1)**

Section 96.5-2-a – Discharge for Misconduct

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Employer filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated May 8, 2009, reference 02, which held claimant eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a telephone conference hearing was scheduled for and held on June 8, 2009. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Rachel Watkinson, Human Resource Associate. Exhibit A was admitted into evidence.

**ISSUE:**

The issue in this matter is whether claimant was discharged for misconduct.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for employer on April 16, 2009.

Claimant was discharged on April 16, 2009 by employer because claimant was involved in a fight at work. Employer has a strict no tolerance policy concerning fighting at work. Any participation in a fight at work results in discharge. Claimant was aware of the fighting policy. Claimant was attacked by a coworker. Claimant was trying to retreat until he was slammed into a wall so hard it caused a concussion. After the injury claimant in a dazed state began defending himself. Claimant subdued the coworker and held him on the floor waiting for help. None arrived and the coworker got up and started hitting claimant again. Claimant fought him down a second time to the floor and stopped. Claimant required medical treatment for his injuries.

## REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF 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.

871 IAC 24.32(8) provides:

(8) Past acts of misconduct. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of a current act of misconduct, a discharge for misconduct cannot be based on such past act or acts. The termination of employment must be based on a current act.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. The lack of a current warning may detract from a finding of an intentional policy violation.

In this matter, the evidence fails to establish that claimant was discharged for an act of misconduct when claimant violated employer's policy concerning fighting. Claimant was warned concerning this policy.

The last incident, which brought about the discharge, fails to constitute misconduct because claimant only fought when it was necessary to defend himself. When he had the coworker on the ground claimant quit. Claimant's injuries indicate that he was in jeopardy of serious injury

and had a right to defend himself. The only refuting evidence is hearsay offered by employer. Claimant's sworn testimony is more credible than hearsay. The administrative law judge holds that claimant was not discharged for an act of misconduct and, as such, is not disqualified for the receipt of unemployment insurance benefits.

**DECISION:**

The decision of the representative dated May 8, 2009, reference 02, is affirmed. Claimant is eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits, provided claimant meets all other eligibility requirements.

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Marlon Mormann  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

mdm/pjs