

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS**

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

**SAMANTHA TANGEMAN**  
Claimant

**APPEAL NO: 09A-UI-03605-BT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE  
DECISION**

**ADVENTURE LANDS OF AMERICA INC**  
Employer

**OC: 01/11/09**  
**Claimant: Respondent (1)**

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

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:**

Adventure Lands of America, Inc. (employer) appealed an unemployment insurance decision dated February 24, 2009, reference 02, which held that Samantha Tangeman (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 April 1, 2009. The claimant participated in the hearing. The employer participated through Andrea Sparrow, Cash Control Manager. 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 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 seasonal supervisor from April 23, 2008 through September 29, 2008 when the park closed for the season. She cashed a personal check at the employer's vault on September 28, 2008 even though she knew it was not permissible. The claimant testified that she had only done it three times and the team leader cashed it for her. The employer testified that the claimant had cashed it herself. The check was returned for insufficient funds on October 15, 2008. The employer did not contact the claimant but sent the check to collections. The cash control manager spoke with management and approximately one month later sent the claimant a letter on November 21, 2008 stating that she was no longer going to be hired by the employer. The claimant still has not paid for the check and the fees associated with its return because she has not, "gotten around to it."

**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 propriety of a discharge is not at issue in an unemployment insurance case. An employer may be justified in discharging an employee, but the employee's conduct may not amount to misconduct precluding the payment of unemployment compensation. The law limits disqualifying misconduct to substantial and willful wrongdoing or repeated carelessness or negligence that equals willful misconduct in culpability. Lee v. Employment Appeal Board, 616 N.W.2d 661, 665 (Iowa 2000).

The claimant was discharged on November 21, 2008 for cashing a bad check at work on September 28, 2008. The employer learned that the check was returned for insufficient funds on October 15, 2008 but waited another month before discharging the claimant. While past acts and warnings can be used to determine the magnitude of the current act of misconduct, a discharge or disciplinary suspension for misconduct cannot be based on such past act(s). The termination or disciplinary suspension of employment must be based on a current act. See 871 IAC 24.32(8). In determining whether the conduct that prompted the discharge constituted a "current act," the administrative law judge considers the date on which the conduct came to the attention of the employer and the date on which the employer notified the claimant that the conduct subjected the claimant to possible discharge. See also Greene v. EAB, 426 N.W.2d 659, 662 (Iowa App. 1988). The employer could offer no reasonable explanation as to the

month long delay in discharging the claimant. While the employer made a good business decision to discharge this employee, the discharge was based on a past act. Inasmuch as the employer has not established a current or final act of misconduct, benefits are allowed.

**DECISION:**

The unemployment insurance decision dated February 24, 2009, reference 02, is affirmed. The claimant was discharged. Misconduct has not been established. Benefits are allowed, provided the claimant is otherwise eligible.

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Susan D. Ackerman  
Administrative Law Judge

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Decision Dated and Mailed

sda/css