

**IN THE IOWA ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS DIVISION
UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE APPEALS BUREAU**

JESSICA L THOMAS
Claimant

APPEAL NO. 24A-UI-07482-JT-T

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
DECISION**

**IOWA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

OC: 04/07/24
Claimant: Appellant (1)

Iowa Code Section 96.6(2) – Timeliness of Appeal
Iowa Code Section 96.4(3) – Able & Available

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

On August 21, 2024, Jessica Thomas (claimant) filed a late appeal from the July 30, 2024 (reference 08) decision that denied benefits for the week ending July 6, 2024, based on Ms. Thomas' weekly claim response that she was not able and/or was not available for work during that week. After due notice was issued, a hearing was held on September 10, 2024. Ms. Thomas participated. The hearing in this matter was consolidated with the hearing in Appeal Number 24AUI07484JTT. Exhibit A was received into evidence. The administrative law judge took official notice of the following agency administrative records: DBRO, KCCO, NMRO, the reference 08, 09 and 11 decisions, and IowaWORKS.gov

ISSUE:

Whether the appeal from the July 30, 2024 (reference 08) decision was timely. Whether there is good cause to treat the appeal as timely.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Having reviewed all of the evidence in the record, the administrative law judge finds:

On July 30, 2024, Iowa Workforce Development mailed the July 30, 2024 (reference 08) decision to claimant Jessica Thomas at her Bettendorf address of record. The reference 08 decision denied benefits for the week ending July 6, 2024, based on Ms. Thomas' weekly claim response that she was not able and/or was not available for work during that week. The reference 08 decision stated the decision would become final unless an appeal was postmarked by August 9, 2024 or was received by the Appeals Section by that date. The reference 08 decision included clear and concise instructions for filing an appeal from the decision online, by fax, by mail and by regular mail. The reference 08 decision was one of two decisions that IWD mailed to Ms. Thomas on July 30, 2024. The weight of the evidence establishes that IWD mailed the reference 08 decision to the address of record in a timely manner and that the United States Postal Service delivered the reference 08 decision to the address of record in a timely manner, prior to the deadline for appeal.

The weight of the evidence indicates a problem with how the mail delivered to Ms. Thomas' mailbox was being collected and transported from the mailbox and being brought to Ms. Thomas' attention. During the time when the reference 08 decision was mailed and delivered to Ms. Thomas' residence, Ms. Thomas' children, ages five to 13 years old, were attempting to be helpful by collecting mail from the mailbox and bringing the mail inside the home. Ms. Thomas does not recall seeing the reference 08 decision or the other decision IWD mailed on July 30, 2024. Ms. Thomas has recently asked the children to leave the mail in the mailbox so that she or the other adult in the home can collect it from the mailbox.

Ms. Thomas did not file an appeal by the August 9, 2024 deadline.

On August 15, 2024, IWD mailed the reference 11 overpayment decision to Ms. Thomas' address on record. The reference 11 decision held that Ms. Thomas was overpaid \$631.00 in unemployment insurance benefits for the week ending July 6, 2024, due to a July 30, 2024 decision that denied benefits for that week. The overpayment decision included an August 25, 2024 appeal deadline.

On August 21, 2024, Ms. Thomas completed and transmitted an online appeal from the August 15, 2024 overpayment decision. The Appeals Bureau received the appeal on August 21, 2024 and treated it as also a late appeal from the July 30, 2024 (reference 08) decision and the other decision mailed on July 30, 2024.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

Iowa Code section 96.6(2) provides:

2. Initial determination. A representative designated by the director shall promptly notify all interested parties to the claim of its filing, and the parties have ten days from the date of mailing the notice of the filing of the claim by ordinary mail to the last known address to protest payment of benefits to the claimant. The representative shall promptly examine the claim and any protest, take the initiative to ascertain relevant information concerning the claim, and, on the basis of the facts found by the representative, shall determine whether or not the claim is valid, the week with respect to which benefits shall commence, the weekly benefit amount payable and its maximum duration, and whether any disqualification shall be imposed. The claimant has the burden of proving that the claimant meets the basic eligibility conditions of section 96.4. The employer has the burden of proving that the claimant is disqualified for benefits pursuant to section 96.5, except as provided by this subsection. The claimant has the initial burden to produce evidence showing that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsections 10 and 11, and has the burden of proving that a voluntary quit pursuant to section 96.5, subsection 1, was for good cause attributable to the employer and that the claimant is not disqualified for benefits in cases involving section 96.5, subsection 1, paragraphs "a" through "h". Unless the claimant or other interested party, after notification or within ten calendar days after notification was mailed to the claimant's last known address, files an appeal from the decision, the decision is final and benefits shall be paid or denied in accordance with the decision. If an administrative law judge affirms a decision of the representative, or the appeal board affirms a decision of the administrative law judge allowing benefits, the benefits shall be paid regardless of any appeal which is thereafter taken, but if the decision is finally reversed, no employer's account shall be charged with benefits so paid and this relief from charges shall apply to

both contributory and reimbursable employers, notwithstanding section 96.8, subsection 5.

The ten-day deadline for appeal begins to run on the date Workforce Development mails the decision to the parties. The "decision date" found in the upper right-hand portion of the Agency representative's decision, unless otherwise corrected immediately below that entry, is presumptive evidence of the date of mailing. *Gaskins v. Unempl. Comp. Bd. of Rev.*, 429 A.2d 138 (Pa. Comm. 1981); *Johnson v. Board of Adjustment*, 239 N.W.2d 873, 92 A.L.R.3d 304 (Iowa 1976).

An appeal submitted by mail is deemed filed on the date it is mailed as shown by the postmark or in the absence of a postmark the postage meter mark of the envelope in which it was received, or if not postmarked or postage meter marked or if the mark is illegible, on the date entered on the document as the date of completion. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 87124.35(1)(a). See also *Messina v. IDJS*, 341 N.W.2d 52 (Iowa 1983). An appeal submitted by any other means is deemed filed on the date it is received by the Unemployment Insurance Division of Iowa Workforce Development. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 87124.35(1)(b).

The evidence in the record establishes that more than ten calendar days elapsed between the mailing date and the date this appeal was filed. The Iowa Supreme Court has declared that there is a mandatory duty to file appeals from representatives' decisions within the time allotted by statute, and that the administrative law judge has no authority to change the decision of a representative if a timely appeal is not filed. *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877, 881 (Iowa 1979). Compliance with appeal notice provisions is jurisdictional unless the facts of a case show that the notice was invalid. *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373, 377 (Iowa 1979); see also *In re Appeal of Elliott*, 319 N.W.2d 244, 247 (Iowa 1982). One question in this case thus becomes whether the appellant was deprived of a reasonable opportunity to assert an appeal in a timely fashion. *Hendren v. IESC*, 217 N.W.2d 255 (Iowa 1974); *Smith v. IESC*, 212 N.W.2d 471, 472 (Iowa 1973).

No submission shall be considered timely if the delay in filing was unreasonable, as determined by the division after considering the circumstances in the case. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 87124.35(2)(c).

The evidence in the record establishes an untimely appeal from the July 30, 2024 (reference 08) decision. The weight of the evidence indicates that IWD mailed and the USPS delivered the decision in a timely manner, but that the family's mail routing arrangement resulted in the decision not coming to Ms. Thomas' attention. Based on the determination of timely delivery of the decision to the address of record, the administrative law judge further concludes that timely delivery provided Ms. Thomas a reasonable opportunity to file an appeal by the August 9, 2024 appeal deadline. The appeal was not filed until August 21, 2024, when the Appeals Bureau received the online appeal from the August 15, 2024 overpayment decision. The late filing of the appeal was not attributable to IWD or to the USPS. Pursuant to the applicable law, there is not good cause to treat the late appeal as a timely appeal. See Iowa Administrative Code rule 87124.35(2). Because the appeal from the July 30, 2024 (reference 08) decision was untimely, the administrative law judge lacks jurisdiction to disturb that decision. See *Beardslee v. IDJS*, 276 N.W.2d 373 (Iowa 1979) and *Franklin v. IDJS*, 277 N.W.2d 877 (Iowa 1979). The June 30, 2024 (reference 08) decision that denied benefits for the week that ended July 6, 2024 remains in effect.

DECISION:

The claimant's appeal from the July 30, 2024 (reference 08) decision was untimely. Accordingly, the decision that denied benefits for the week that ended July 6, 2024 remains in effect.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James E. Timberland".

James E. Timberland
Administrative Law Judge

September 12, 2024
Decision Dated and Mailed

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APPEAL RIGHTS. If you disagree with the decision, you or any interested party may:

1. Appeal to the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days of the date under the judge's signature by submitting a written appeal via mail, fax, or online to:

**Employment Appeal Board
6200 Park Ave Suite 100
Des Moines, Iowa 50321
Fax: (515)281-7191
Online: eab.iowa.gov**

The appeal period will be extended to the next business day if the last day to appeal falls on a weekend or a legal holiday.

AN APPEAL TO THE BOARD SHALL STATE CLEARLY:

- 1) The name, address, and social security number of the claimant.
- 2) A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
- 3) That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
- 4) The grounds upon which such appeal is based.

An Employment Appeal Board decision is final agency action. If a party disagrees with the Employment Appeal Board decision, they may then file a petition for judicial review in district court.

2. If no one files an appeal of the judge's decision with the Employment Appeal Board within fifteen (15) days, the decision becomes final agency action, and you have the option to file a petition for judicial review in District Court within thirty (30) days after the decision becomes final. Additional information on how to file a petition can be found at Iowa Code §17A.19, which is online at <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf>.

Note to Parties: YOU MAY REPRESENT yourself in the appeal or obtain a lawyer or other interested party to do so provided there is no expense to Workforce Development. If you wish to be represented by a lawyer, you may obtain the services of either a private attorney or one whose services are paid for with public funds.

Note to Claimant: It is important that you file your weekly claim as directed, while this appeal is pending, to protect your continuing right to benefits.

SERVICE INFORMATION:

A true and correct copy of this decision was mailed to each of the parties listed.

DERECHOS DE APELACIÓN. Si no está de acuerdo con la decisión, usted o cualquier parte interesada puede:

1. Apelar a la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo dentro de los quince (15) días de la fecha bajo la firma del juez presentando una apelación por escrito por correo, fax o en línea a:

**Employment Appeal Board
6200 Park Ave Suite 100
Des Moines, Iowa 50321
Fax: (515)281-7191
En línea: eab.iowa.gov**

El período de apelación se extenderá hasta el siguiente día hábil si el último día para apelar cae en fin de semana o día feriado legal.

UNA APELACIÓN A LA JUNTA DEBE ESTABLECER CLARAMENTE:

- 1) El nombre, dirección y número de seguro social del reclamante.
- 2) Una referencia a la decisión de la que se toma la apelación.
- 3) Que se interponga recurso de apelación contra tal decisión y se firme dicho recurso.
- 4) Los fundamentos en que se funda dicho recurso.

Una decisión de la Junta de Apelaciones de Empleo es una acción final de la agencia. Si una de las partes no está de acuerdo con la decisión de la Junta de Apelación de Empleo, puede presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el tribunal de distrito.

2. Si nadie presenta una apelación de la decisión del juez ante la Junta de Apelaciones Laborales dentro de los quince (15) días, la decisión se convierte en acción final de la agencia y usted tiene la opción de presentar una petición de revisión judicial en el Tribunal de Distrito dentro de los treinta (30) días después de que la decisión adquiriera firmeza. Puede encontrar información adicional sobre cómo presentar una petición en el Código de Iowa §17A.19, que está en línea en <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/17A.19.pdf>.

Nota para las partes: USTED PUEDE REPRESENTARSE en la apelación u obtener un abogado u otra parte interesada para que lo haga, siempre que no haya gastos para Workforce Development. Si desea ser representado por un abogado, puede obtener los servicios de un abogado privado o uno cuyos servicios se paguen con fondos públicos.

Nota para el reclamante: es importante que presente su reclamo semanal según las instrucciones, mientras esta apelación está pendiente, para proteger su derecho continuo a los beneficios.

SERVICIO DE INFORMACIÓN:

Se envió por correo una copia fiel y correcta de esta decisión a cada una de las partes enumeradas.