



Department of Inspections,
Appeals, & Licensing

Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, & Licensing
Administrative Hearings Division
6200 Park Avenue, Suite 100, East Entrance
Des Moines, IA 50321-1270

Appeal Decision

Claim Number:
[REDACTED]

Determination Number:
7559555

Appeal Filed By:
VONACHEN GROUP INC.

Appeal Filed Date:
03/09/2026

Appeals Bureau Docket:
2026004063-AT



APPEALS BUREAU DECISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE

Mail Date: April 16, 2026

Appellee

Claimant/Job Seeker:

DOMINGO OCHOA

Appellant

Employer:

Vonachen Group Inc.



In regard to the appeal by VONACHEN GROUP INC.:

STATUTORY REFERENCE

DECISION/REMAND

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

Iowa Code § 96.3(7) - Recovery of Benefit Overpayment

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 - Employer/Representative Participation Fact-finding Interview

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:

Employer Vonachen Group Inc. filed an appeal from a decision of a representative dated February 25, 2026 that held claimant eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. After due notice, a hearing was scheduled for and held on March 23, 2026. Claimant participated personally. Employer participated by Marlene Sartin, a hearing representative with UC Advantage; Kristoffer Reyes and Brett Liagre. The administrative law judge took official notice of the administrative record.

ISSUE:

Was the separation from employment a voluntary quit, a discharge for misconduct or a layoff? Was the claimant overpaid benefits? Should the claimant repay benefits? Is the employer's account chargeable due to participation in the fact-finding interview?

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Equal Opportunity:

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. For deaf and hard of hearing, use Relay 711.



The administrative law judge, having heard the testimony and considered all of the evidence in the record, finds: Claimant last worked for employer on January 30, 2026. Employer discharged claimant on January 30, 2026, because of insubordination, harassment, sexual harassment, and threatening behavior.

Claimant began working for employer as a full-time laborer on May 25, 2023. Claimant was given a copy of employer's written rules and policies, and he received on the job training at the time of hire. Employer's written rules include prohibitions against insubordination, sexual harassment, and the use of threatening language. The employer also requires a workplace which fosters mutual respect.

Claimant had no prior verbal or written warnings.

On the night of January 29, 2026, Claimant became angry at his supervisor, Brett Liagre. Claimant did not want to take instructions from his supervisor. Claimant believed that Mr. Liagre should have other fork drivers do some of the assigned tasks. At one point, Claimant went to retrieve his glasses. Upon returning, Mr. Liagre asked if Claimant could drive, and Claimant indicated that if he couldn't see, he would have hit Mr. Liagre.

Claimant used derogatory and sexually-explicit language as he yelled at his supervisor, and he made inflammatory comments about his supervisor's sexual orientation in violation of employer's policy. Upon contacting the owner of the business, Kris Reyes, Mr. Liagre told Claimant that Claimant would have to leave and Mr. Liagre escorted him out. Claimant continued to use profane and derogatory language as he left. The Employer's Human Resources unit conducted an investigation and recommended that Claimant be terminated. Mr. Reyes provided the termination on February 4, 2026.

The administrative record reflects that claimant has received unemployment benefits in the amount of \$4,113.00, since filing a claim with an effective date of February 7, 2026, for the nine weeks ending April 4, 2026. The administrative record also establishes that the employer did not participate in the fact-finding phone call. The employer did participate by submission of SIDES records by sending sufficient information to the fact-finder.

REASONING AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

For the reasons that follow, the administrative law judge concludes the claimant was discharged from employment for disqualifying misconduct.

Iowa Code section 96.5(2)a and d provide:

An individual shall be disqualified for benefits, regardless of the source of the individual's wage credits:

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 disqualification shall continue 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.

d. For the purposes of this subsection, "misconduct" means a deliberate act or omission by an employee that constitutes a material breach of the duties and obligations arising out of the employee's contract of employment. Misconduct is 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 even 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. Misconduct by an individual includes but is not limited to all of the following:...

(2) Knowing violation of a reasonable and uniformly enforced rule of an employer...

In this instance, Claimant violated a reasonably and uniformly enforced rule of his employer in regard to insubordination, sexual harassment, and the use of threatening behavior.

The gravity of the incident, number of policy violations and prior warnings are factors considered when analyzing misconduct. The employer has the burden of proof in establishing disqualifying job misconduct. *Cosper v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 321 N.W.2d 6 (Iowa 1982). The issue is not whether the employer made a correct decision in separating claimant, but whether the claimant is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. *Infante v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 364 N.W.2d 262 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). What constitutes misconduct justifying termination of an employee and what misconduct warrants denial of unemployment insurance benefits are two separate decisions. *Pierce v. Iowa Dep't of Job Serv.*, 425 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa Ct. App. 1988). Misconduct serious enough to warrant discharge is not necessarily serious enough to warrant a denial of job insurance benefits. Such misconduct



must be “substantial.” *Newman v. Iowa Dep’t of Job Serv.*, 351 N.W.2d 806 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984). “Balky and argumentative” conduct is not necessarily disqualifying. *City of Des Moines v. Picray*, 348 N.W.2d 645 (Iowa Ct. App. 1984).

It is true that “[t]he use of profanity or offensive language in a confrontational, disrespectful, or name-calling context may be recognized as misconduct, even in the case of isolated incidents or situations in which the target of abusive name-calling is not present when the vulgar statements are initially made.” *Myers v. Emp’t Appeal Bd.*, 462 N.W.2d 734 (Iowa Ct. App. 1990). In this instance, the Claimant’s language was threatening, abusive, and sexual in nature. The language was confrontational, disrespectful and evidence of insubordination. As such this misconduct is ‘substantial’ and justifying termination and denial of unemployment insurance benefits.

Iowa Admin. Code r. 871-24.10 provides:

Employer and employer representative participation in fact-finding interviews.

(1) “Participate,” as the term is used for employers in the context of the initial determination to award benefits pursuant to Iowa Code section 96.6, subsection 2, means submitting detailed factual information of the quantity and quality that if un rebutted would be sufficient to result in a decision favorable to the employer. The most effective means to participate is to provide live testimony at the interview from a witness with firsthand knowledge of the events leading to the separation. If no live testimony is provided, the employer must provide the name and telephone number of an employee with firsthand information who may be contacted, if necessary, for rebuttal. A party may also participate by providing detailed written statements or documents that provide detailed factual information of the events leading to separation. At a minimum, the information provided by the employer or the employer’s representative must identify the dates and particular circumstances of the incident or incidents, including, in the case of discharge, the act or omissions of the claimant or, in the event of a voluntary separation, the stated reason for the quit. The specific rule or policy must be submitted if the claimant was discharged for violating such rule or policy. In the case of discharge for attendance violations, the information must include the circumstances of all incidents the employer or the employer’s representative contends meet the definition of unexcused absences as set forth in [871-subrule 24.32\(7\)](#). On the other hand, written or oral statements or general conclusions without supporting detailed factual information and information submitted after the fact-finding decision has been issued are not considered participation within the meaning of the statute.

In this case, the claimant has received benefits but was not eligible for those benefits. Since the employer did participate in the fact-finding interview the claimant is obligated to repay to the agency the benefits he received in connection with this employer’s account, and this employer’s account shall not be charged.

DECISION:

The February 25, 2026 decision is REVERSED. The claimant was discharged from employment due to job-related misconduct. Benefits are withheld until such time as 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 claimant has been overpaid unemployment insurance benefits in the amount of \$4,113.00 and is obligated to repay the agency those benefits. The employer did participate in the fact-finding interview and its account shall not be charged.



Rebecca Stonawski

Rebecca STONAWSKI

Administrative Law Judge

Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, & Licensing

Administrative Hearings Division

Unemployment Insurance Appeals Bureau

Please see the last page of this document for important information about reopening the appeal and further appeal rights.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILING AN APPEAL

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 Avenue Suite 100
Des Moines, IA 50321
Fax: (515)281-7191
Online: IowaWORKS account

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. A reference to the decision from which the appeal is taken.
2. That an appeal from such decision is being made and such appeal is signed.
3. 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> or by contacting the District Court Clerk of Court <https://www.iowacourts.gov/iowa-courts/court-directory/>.

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 Iowa 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 the 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.



Babel Notice – Claim and Appeal Information

Aviso: Aviso: Documento De Beneficios Del Seguro De Desempleo
Y Información De Apelación

IMPORTANT!

This document contains important information about your unemployment compensation rights, responsibilities and/or benefits. It is critical that you understand the information in this document. **DEADLINE FOR APPEAL:** If you disagree with this determination or decision, you must file an appeal before the deadline noted in this document. **IMMEDIATELY:** If needed, call 866-239-0843 for assistance in the translation and understanding of the information in the document(s) you have received.

¡IMPORTANTE!

Este documento contiene información importante sobre sus derechos, obligaciones y/o beneficios de compensación por desempleo. Es muy importante que usted entienda la información contenida en este documento. **PLAZO LÍMITE PARA APELAR:** Si usted está en desacuerdo con esta determinación o decisión, debe presentar una apelación antes del plazo límite indicado en este documento. **INMEDIATAMENTE:** Si necesita asistencia para traducir y entender la información contenida en el documento(s) que recibió, llame al 866-239-0843.

重要提示！

这份文件包含有关失业补偿的权利、责任和/或利益的重要信息。您需要理解本文件中的信息，这一点至关重要。

上诉截止日期：如果您不同意本裁定或决定，您必须在本文件所载截止日期前提出上诉。**立即：**如果需要，请拨打866-239-0843，可获得帮助，以利您翻译和理解所收到的文件中的信息。

IMPORTANT!

Ce document contient des informations importantes sur vos droits d'allocation de chômage, vos responsabilités et/ou vos bénéfices. Il est indispensable que vous compreniez le contenu de ce document. **DATE LIMITE POUR FAIRE APPEL:** Si vous n'êtes pas d'accord avec cette détermination ou décision, vous devrez faire un appel avant la date limite signalée dans ce document. **IMMÉDIATEMENT:** Si nécessaire, téléphonez au 866-239-0843 pour avoir de l'assistance sur la traduction et/ou la compréhension de ce document.

WICHTIG!

Diese Dokument enthält wichtige Hinweise zu ihren Rechten, Pflichten bzw. Leistungen im Rahmen der Arbeitslosenunterstützung. Es ist entscheidend, dass Sie die Informationen in diesem Dokument verstehen. **FRIST ZUR BESCHWERDEEINLEGUNG:** Wenn Sie mit der Feststellung oder Entscheidung nicht einverstanden sind, müssen Sie vor Ablauf der in diesem Dokument aufgeführten Frist eine Beschwerde einlegen. **SOFORT:** Sofern erforderlich, rufen Sie die Telefonnummer 866-239-0843 an und erkundigen sich nach Hilfsdiensten bei der Übersetzung und zum Verständnis der Informationen in dem (den) von Ihnen erhaltenen Dokument(en).

IMPORTANTE!

Ang mga dokumentong ito ay naglalaman ng mahalagang impormasyon tungkol sa iyong mga karapatan na makatanggap ng kabayaran, mga responsibilidad at /o benepisyo dahil sa pagkawala ng trabaho. Napakahalagang maunawaan mo ang mga impormasyong nilalaman sa dokumentong ito. **HULING ARAW PARA UMAPILA:** Kung hindi ka sumasang-ayon sa pagpapasiya o desisyon, dapat kang maghabol o magharap ng apila bago dumating ang huling araw na nabanggit sa dokumentong ito. **KAAGAD:** Kung kinakailangan ang tulong, tumawag sa 866-239-0843 para sa pagsasalin ng wika at pag-unawa ng impormasyon sa mga dokumentong natanggap mo.

IMPORTANTE:

Questo documento contiene informazioni importanti sui Suoi diritti di indennizzo di disoccupazione, sulle sue responsabilità e i suoi benefit. E' cruciale che Lei comprenda appieno le informazioni contenute in questo documento. **SCADENZA PER IL RICORSO:** Se non si trova in accordo con questa determinazione o decisione, dovrà presentare ricorso prima della scadenza riportata nel presente documento. **INMEDIATAMENTE:** In caso di necessità chiami il 866-239-0843 per assistenza alla traduzione e comprensione delle informazioni contenute nei documenti ricevuti.

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중요!

이 문서는 실업보상 권리, 책임 및/또는 혜택에 대한 중요한 정보가 포함되어 있습니다. 이 문서에 있는 정보를 이해 하는 것은 매우 중요합니다. **항소 마감:** 이 결정에 이견이 있으시면 항소인은 문서에 언급된 마감일 전에 항소를 제기하셔야 합니다. **즉시:** 받으신 문서의 번역 및 이해를 위해서 도움이 필요하시면 866-239-0843 로연락을 하시기 바랍니다.

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Dokumenty mogą zawierać ważne informacje o Pana(-i) prawach do zasiłków dla bezrobotnych, obowiązków i/lub świadczeń. Zrozumienie informacji zawartych w niniejszym dokumencie jest bardzo ważne. **DATA WYGAŚNIĘCIA TERMINU SKŁADANIA ODWOŁAŃ:** Jeśli nie zgadza się Pan(-i) z decyzją zawartą w niniejszym dokumencie, odwołanie należy złożyć przed datą wygaśnięcia terminu wyszczególnionego w treści niniejszego dokumentu. **NATYCHMIAST:** W razie potrzeby, należy dzwonić pod 866-239-0843 w celu uzyskania pomocy w tłumaczeniu i zrozumieniu informacji w dokumentach, które Pan(i) otrzymał(-a).

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VAŽNO!

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ໝາາງເຫລອ ສາ

ູ່ສໍາຄັນ! ເອກະສານນີ້ປະກອບດ້ວຍຂໍ້ມູນທີ່ສໍາຄັນກ່ຽວກັບສິດທິການຊົດເຊີຍການຫວ່າງງານ, ຄວາມຮັບຜິດຊອບ ແລະ/ຫຼືຜົນປະໂຫຍດຂອງທ່ານ. ມັນເປັນສິ່ງ ສໍາ ຄັນທີ່ທ່ານຕ້ອງເຂົ້າໃຈຂໍ້ມູນໃນເອກະສານນີ້. ກໍານົດເວລາການອຸທອນ: ຖ້າທ່ານບໍ່ເຫັນດີກັບການກໍານົດ ຫຼືການຕັດສິນໃຈນີ້, ທ່ານຕ້ອງອໍ້ນອຸທອນກ່ອນກໍານົດເວລາທີ່ລະບຸໄວ້ໃນເອກະສານນີ້. ທັນທີ: ຖ້າຕ້ອງການ, ໃຫ້ໃບຫາ 866-239-0843 ສໍາລັບການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອໃນການແປ ແລະຄວາມເຂົ້າໃຈຂອງຂໍ້ມູນໃນເອກະສານທີ່ທ່ານໄດ້ຮັບ.

هام!

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