

**BEFORE THE
SOUTH CAROLINA WORKERS' COMPENSATION COMMISSIONS'
APPELLATE PANEL**

SAMUEL A. ROSE,)
Claimant/Respondent,)
)
v.)
)
JJS TRUCKING, LLC)
Uninsured Employer/Respondent,)
and)
CHRIS THOMPSON SERVICES, LLC,)
Upstream Contractor, and)
BRIDGEFIELD CASUALTY INS. CO.,)
Carrier, Appellants,)
and)
S.C. UNINSURED EMPLOYERS' FUND,)
Respondent.)

W.C.C. FILE NO. 1112328

DECISION & ORDER

RECEIVED
JUN 17 2013
SC Court of Appeals

Statement of the Case

This matter is before the Commission's Appellate Panel pursuant to the Form 30 filed by Chris Thompson Services and Bridgefield Casualty, seeking review and reversal of the August 23, 2012 Decision and Order of Hearing Commissioner McCaskill. The Appellants respectfully contend that Commissioner McCaskill erred as a matter of law in failing to transfer liability to the UEF pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 42-1-415, erred as a matter of law in ordering the Appellants to reimburse "all out of pocket medical expenses," and erred as a matter of law in awarding the Claimant future medical treatment pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 42-1-415.

The Hearing Commissioner's Decision and Order contained the following findings of fact and conclusions of law:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. *Samuel Rose was an employee of JJS Trucking on August 10, 2011.*
2. *On August 10, 2011, Samuel Rose sustained an injury by accident to his head, knee, leg back and neck arising out of and in the course of his employment with JJS Trucking.*
3. *Claimant has an average weekly wage of \$650.00 and a compensation rate of \$433.34.*
4. *Claimant is not at maximum medical improvement.*
5. *As a result of his accident, Claimant is entitled to temporary total disability benefits beginning on August 10, 2011 and continuing until such time as he reaches maximum medical improvement.*
6. *As a result of his accident, Claimant is entitled to an evaluation to determine the extent of his injuries and is entitled to ongoing medical treatment as prescribed by an authorized treating physician to be selected by the carrier.*
7. *On or about October 8, 2010, JJS Trucking, LLC represented to Chris Thompson Services, LLC that it had workers' compensation insurance.*
8. *On August 10, 2011, JJS Trucking was operating without proper insurance as required by the Workers' Compensation Act.*
9. *On August 10, 2011, JJS Trucking was operating as a subcontractor for Chris Thompson Services, LLC. Chris Thompson Services, LLC, is an "upstream employer" pursuant to §42-1415.*
10. *Chris Thompson Services, LLC is liable to pay Claimant all benefits to which he is entitled under the Act.*

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. *On August 10, 2011 Samuel Rose was an "employee" of JJS Trucking as defined in S.C. Code Ann. § 42-1-130 (1976).*
2. *At the time of the Claimant's accident, JJS Trucking possessed over the Claimant the actual right and authority to control and direct his particular work or undertaking and the manner or means of its accomplishment, consistent with the definition of an employee provided in Young v. Warr, 252 S.C. 179, 189, 165 S.E.2d 797, 802 (1969).*
3. *The testimony of the Claimant, his immediate employer, Cedric Smalls, and the upstream contractor, Chris Thompson, combined with the evidence available in the record, when evaluated using the factors outlined in Nelson v. Yellow Cab Co., 564 SE 2d 110 (S.C. 2002), weigh towards finding Claimant is an employee and not an independent contractor. This finding is consistent with South Carolina's policy to resolve jurisdictional doubts in favor of the inclusion of employers and employees under the Workers' Compensation Act. See South Carolina Workers' Compensation Comm'r v. Ray Covington Realtors, Inc., 318 S.C. 546, 459 S.E.2d 302 (1995).*
4. *Claimant is entitled to temporary total disability benefits beginning on August 10, 2011 pursuant to § 42-9-10 until such time as he is able to return to work.*
5. *Claimant is entitled to medical treatment causally related to his injury pursuant to §42- 15-60. Claimant is entitled to reimbursement for all out of pocket medical expenses incurred to date. Carrier shall select an authorized treating physician.*
6. *Claimant was an employee of JJS Trucking which, at the time of his accident, was an uninsured subcontractor. Pursuant to § 42-1-415(A) Chris*

Thompson Services, LLC, as the higher tier contractor, shall pay all benefits due the Claimant under the Workers' Compensation Act.

5. *Chris Thompson Services, LLC, asserted in its pleadings and at the Hearing that liability for this claim should be transferred to the South Carolina Uninsured Employer's Fund. § 42-1415 only permits the higher tier contractor to petition the Commission to transfer responsibility for benefits to the UEF after it has paid all benefits due the Claimant under the Act. The evidence in the record indicates that Claimant has not received all benefits he is due under the Act from Chris Thompson Services, LLC, or its carrier. Therefore, the issue of transfer of responsibility to the UEF is not ripe for adjudication at this time.*
6. *Chris Thompson Services, LLC is entitled to credit for any compensation paid to the Claimant prior to the date of this Order.*
7. *Traveler's Indemnity was not the carrier for JJS Trucking, LLC on the date of Claimant's injury and therefore is dismissed as a party to this claim.*

Furthermore, the Form 30 filed by the Appellants alleges the followings errors and exceptions:

1. *The Hearing Commissioner erred in finding that Chris Thompson Services, LLC is liable to pay Claimant all benefits to which he is entitled under the Act, as this "finding" is arbitrary, capricious, impermissibly vague, and contrary to the greater weight of the evidence and the applicable law.*

2. *The Hearing Commissioner erred in finding that the Claimant sustained an injury to his head, knee, leg, back, and neck, as this finding is arbitrary, capricious, impermissibly vague, and otherwise contrary to the greater weight of the evidence and the applicable law.*
3. *The Hearing Commissioner erred in "finding" that the Claimant is entitled to temporary total disability benefits from August 10, 2011 and continuing until, as this finding is arbitrary, capricious, impermissibly vague, and otherwise contrary to the greater weight of the evidence and the applicable law.*
4. *The Hearing Commissioner erred in "finding" that the Claimant is entitled to an evaluation to determine the extent of his injuries, as this finding is arbitrary, capricious, impermissibly vague, and otherwise contrary to the greater weight of the evidence and the applicable law.*
5. *The Hearing Commissioner erred in "finding" that the Claimant is entitled to ongoing medical treatment, as this finding is arbitrary, capricious, impermissibly vague, and otherwise contrary to the greater weight of the evidence and the applicable law.*
6. *The Hearing Commissioner erred as a matter of law in concluding that the Claimant is entitled to reimbursement for all out of pocket medical expenses incurred to date, as this conclusion is arbitrary, capricious, and otherwise contrary to the greater weight of the evidence and the applicable law.*

7. *The Hearing Commissioner erred as a matter of law in concluding that the Claimant has not received all benefits due under the Act, as this "conclusion" is arbitrary, capricious, and otherwise contrary to the greater weight of the evidence in the record and the applicable law.*
8. *The Hearing Commissioner erred as a matter of law in concluding that the issue of transfer of responsibility to the UEF is not ripe for adjudication at this time, as this conclusion is arbitrary, capricious, and otherwise contrary to the greater weight of the evidence in the record and the applicable law.*

Evidence Summary

The Claimant testified that he was employed as a driver for JJS Trucking on August 10, 2011 when he was injured in a motor vehicle accident. Since the accident, the Claimant has received medical treatment from MUSC, Dr. Abel, and Dr. Wildstein for alleged injuries to his back, knee, and left hand. Although the Claimant testified that he has been unable to work since the accident, the originally hearing in this case had to be rescheduled due to the Claimant's incarceration. According to the Claimant, he was accused of stealing a 32" television, some barstools, and a computer. The Claimant testified that, "the police said a witness observed me running across the parking lot running from an apartment across the street to my mom's car and putting it in the car." In addition, the Claimant testified that he fell down the stairs in January 2012 at his mother's house, which increased his pain and resulted in him using a cane.

Chris Thompson testified that JJS Trucking was operating as a subcontractor Chris Thompson Services, LLC, at the time in question. Mr. Thompson testified that he obtained a

Certificate of Insurance from JJS Trucking at the time his relationship with the company began in 2008 and that he has requested and obtained updated Certificates of Insurance from JJS Trucking on a yearly basis since that time. Mr. Thompson identified the October 18, 2010 Certificate of Insurance contained in the Record (Appellants' APA #6, p.39). This Certificate shows that JJS Trucking had workers' compensation coverage through Travelers Insurance for the period from October 8, 2010 through October 8, 2011. This Certificate shows Chris Thompson Services as the Certificate Holder and is signed by David W. Hayes, whom Mr. Thompson identified as the owner of the Producer, the Swamp Fox Agency. Mr. Thompson testified that after receiving this Certificate of Insurance, he had no reason to believe that JJS Trucking did not have workers' compensation insurance until after the Claimant's accident.

The record reveals that Travelers Insurance did, in fact, insure JJS Trucking for a period after the Certificate of Insurance was issued, but the policy lapsed without notice to Chris Thompson Services by any person or entity. Cedric Smalls, the owner of JJS Trucking, confirmed that he did not ever inform Chris Thompson Services that his workers' compensation insurance had lapsed and further testified that Chris Thompson would not allow him to work as a subcontractor if his workers' compensation insurance ever lapsed.

At the time of the hearing, the Claimant was receiving weekly temporary total disability compensation from the Chris Thompson's carrier, as reflected on the Form 18.

Conclusion

After reviewing the record and considering the briefs and oral arguments, we AFFIRM with AMEND in part, as follows:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Samuel Rose was an employee of JJS Trucking on August 10, 2011.

2. On August 10, 2011, Samuel Rose sustained an injury by accident to his head, knee, leg
back and neck arising out of and in the course of his employment with JJS Trucking.
3. Claimant has an average weekly wage of \$650.00 and a compensation rate of \$433.34.
4. Claimant is not at maximum medical improvement.
5. As a result of his accident, Claimant is entitled to temporary total disability benefits beginning on August 10, 2011 and continuing until such time as he reaches maximum medical improvement.
6. As a result of his accident, Claimant is entitled to an evaluation to determine the extent of his injuries and is entitled to ongoing medical treatment as prescribed by an authorized treating physician to be selected by the carrier.
7. On or about October 8, 2010, JJS Trucking, LLC represented to Chris Thompson Services, LLC that it had workers' compensation insurance.
8. On August 10, 2011, JJS Trucking was operating without proper insurance as required by the Workers' Compensation Act.
9. On August 10, 2011, JJS Trucking was operating as a subcontractor for Chris Thompson Services, LLC. Chris Thompson Services, LLC, is an "upstream employer" pursuant to §42-1415.
9. Chris Thompson Services, LLC is liable to pay Claimant all benefits to which he is entitled under the Act.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. On August 10, 2011 Samuel Rose was an "employee" of JJS Trucking as defined in S.C. Code Ann. § 42-1-130 (1976).
2. At the time of the Claimant's accident, JJS Trucking possessed over the Claimant the actual right and authority to control and direct his particular work or undertaking and the manner or means of its accomplishment, consistent with the definition of an employee provided in Young v. Warr, 252 S.C. 179, 189, 165 S.E.2d 797, 802 (1969).
3. The testimony of the Claimant, his immediate employer, Cedric Smalls, and the upstream contractor, Chris Thompson, combined with the evidence available in the record, when evaluated using the factors outlined in Nelson v. Yellow Cab Co., 564 SE 2d 110 (S.C. 2002), weigh towards finding Claimant is an employee and not an independent contractor. This finding is consistent with South Carolina's policy to resolve jurisdictional doubts in favor of the inclusion of employers and employees under the Workers' Compensation Act. See South Carolina Workers' Compensation Comm'r v. Ray Covington Realtors, Inc., 318 S.C. 546, 459 S.E.2d 302 (1995).
4. Claimant is entitled to temporary total disability benefits beginning on August 10, 2011 pursuant to § 42-9-10 until such time as he is able to return to work.
5. Claimant is entitled to medical treatment causally related to his injury pursuant to §42-15-60. Claimant's past causally-related medical treatment should be paid directly to the providers pursuant to the Fee Schedule. Carrier shall select an authorized treating physician for any future medical treatment.

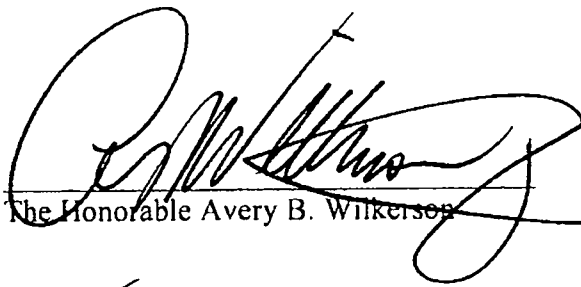
5. Claimant was an employee of JJS Trucking which, at the time of his accident, was an uninsured subcontractor. Pursuant to § 42-1-415(A) Chris Thompson Services, LLC, as the higher tier contractor, shall pay all benefits due the Claimant under the Workers' Compensation Act.
6. Chris Thompson Services, LLC, asserted in its pleadings and at the Hearing that liability for this claim should be transferred to the South Carolina Uninsured Employer's Fund. § 42-1415 only permits the higher tier contractor to petition the Commission to transfer responsibility for benefits to the UEF after it has paid all benefits due the Claimant under the Act. The evidence in the record indicates that Claimant has not received all benefits he is due under the Act from Chris Thompson Services, LLC, or its carrier. Therefore, the issue of transfer of responsibility to the UEF is not ripe for adjudication at this time.
7. Chris Thompson Services, LLC is entitled to credit for any compensation paid to the Claimant prior to the date of this Order.
8. Traveler's Indemnity was not the carrier for JJS Trucking, LLC on the date of Claimant's injury and therefore is dismissed as a party to this claim.

ORDER

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the statutory employer, Chris Thompson Services, LLC, through its carrier, Bridgefield Casualty Insurance Company, is liable for this claim and shall pay Claimant's medical treatment and temporary total disability benefits beginning August 10, 2011 and continuing through such time Claimant is able to return to work.

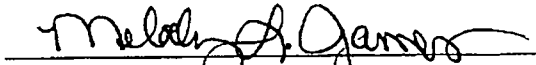
All other issues are held in abeyance.

IT IS SO ORDERED!


The Honorable Avery B. Wilkerson

WE CONCUR:


The Honorable T. Scott Beck


The Honorable Melody James

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

This is to certify that the undersigned has this date served this order in the above entitled action upon all parties to this cause by depositing a copy hereof, postage paid, in the United State mail addressed to the attorney or attorneys for said parties.

This 15 day of May, 2013
By Valerie D. Deller

Administrative Assistant to the Commissioner

- Amy V. Cofield
- Kirsten L. Barr
- Joseph B. Fisher
- Chris Thompson Services (Reg & cert)
- JTS Trucking LLC (Reg & cert)