

**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
Unemployment Compensation Appeals  
THE CALDWELL BUILDING  
107 EAST MADISON STREET  
TALLAHASSEE FL 32399-4143**

**PETITIONER:**

Employer Account No. - 3045935  
STEWART OXYGEN SERVICE OF CENTRAL  
FLORIDA INC  
8994 SEMINOLE BLVD STE 6  
SEMINOLE FL 33772

**RESPONDENT:**

State of Florida  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITY  
c/o Department of Revenue

**PROTEST OF LIABILITY  
DOCKET NO. 2011-135366L**

**ORDER**

This matter comes before me for final Department Order.

Having fully considered the Special Deputy's Recommended Order and the record of the case and in the absence of any exceptions to the Recommended Order, I adopt the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law as set forth therein. A copy of the Recommended Order is attached and incorporated in this Final Order.

In consideration thereof, it is ORDERED that the determination dated September 21, 2011, is AFFIRMED.

### JUDICIAL REVIEW

Any request for judicial review must be initiated within 30 days of the date the Order was filed. Judicial review is commenced by filing one copy of a *Notice of Appeal* with the DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY at the address shown at the top of this *Order* and a second copy, with filing fees prescribed by law, with the appropriate District Court of Appeal. It is the responsibility of the party appealing to the Court to prepare a transcript of the record. If no court reporter was at the hearing, the transcript must be prepared from a copy of the Special Deputy's hearing recording, which may be requested from the Office of Appeals.

Cualquier solicitud para revisión judicial debe ser iniciada dentro de los 30 días a partir de la fecha en que la Orden fue registrada. La revisión judicial se comienza al registrar una copia de un *Aviso de Apelación* con la Agencia para la Innovación de la Fuerza Laboral [*DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY*] en la dirección que aparece en la parte superior de este *Orden* y una segunda copia, con los honorarios de registro prescritos por la ley, con el Tribunal Distrital de Apelaciones pertinente. Es la responsabilidad de la parte apelando al tribunal la de preparar una transcripción del registro. Si en la audiencia no se encontraba ningún estenógrafo registrado en los tribunales, la transcripción debe ser preparada de una copia de la grabación de la audiencia del Delegado Especial [*Special Deputy*], la cual puede ser solicitada de la Oficina de Apelaciones.

Nenpòt demann pou yon revizyon jiridik fèt pou l kòmanse lan yon peryòd 30 jou apati de dat ke Lòd la te depoze a. Revizyon jiridik la kòmanse avèk depo yon kopi yon *Avi Dapèl* ki voye bay DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY lan nan adrès ki parèt pi wo a, lan tèt Lòd sa a e yon dezyèm kopi, avèk frè depo ki preskri pa lalwa, bay Kou Dapèl Distrik apwopriye a. Se responsabilite pati k ap prezante apèl la bay Tribinal la pou l prepare yon kopi dosye a. Si pa te gen yon stenograf lan seyans lan, kopi a fèt pou l prepare apati de kopi anrejistreman seyans lan ke Adjwen Spesyal la te fè a, e ke w ka mande Biwo Dapèl la voye pou ou.

DONE and ORDERED at Tallahassee, Florida, this \_\_\_\_\_ day of **April, 2012**.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Altemese Smith,  
Assistant Director,  
Unemployment Compensation Services  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

FILED ON THIS DATE PURSUANT TO § 120.52,  
FLORIDA STATUTES, WITH THE DESIGNATED  
DEPARTMENT CLERK, RECEIPT OF WHICH IS  
HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGED.

*Shanendra Barnes*

\_\_\_\_\_  
DEPUTY CLERK

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

**I HEREBY CERTIFY that true and correct copies of the foregoing Final Order have been furnished to the persons listed below in the manner described, on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of April, 2012.**

*Shanendra Barnes*

\_\_\_\_\_  
SHANEDRA Y. BARNES, Special Deputy Clerk  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC  
OPPORTUNITY  
Unemployment Compensation Appeals  
107 EAST MADISON STREET  
TALLAHASSEE FL 32399-4143

By U.S. Mail:

STEWART OXYGEN SERVICE OF CENTRAL  
FLORIDA INC  
8994 SEMINOLE BLVD STE 6  
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State of Florida  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
c/o Department of Revenue

DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE  
ATTN: VANDA RAGANS - CCOC #1 4624  
5050 WEST TENNESSEE STREET  
TALLAHASSEE FL 32399

**DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
Unemployment Compensation Appeals**

MSC 344 CALDWELL BUILDING  
107 EAST MADISON STREET  
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**PETITIONER:**

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**RESPONDENT:**

State of Florida  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC  
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c/o Department of Revenue

**PROTEST OF LIABILITY  
DOCKET NO. 2011-135366L**

**RECOMMENDED ORDER OF SPECIAL DEPUTY**

TO: Deputy Director,  
Director, Unemployment Compensation Services  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

This matter comes before the undersigned Special Deputy pursuant to the Petitioner's protest of the Respondent's determination dated September 21, 2011.

After due notice to the parties, a telephone hearing was held on January 25, 2012. The Petitioner, represented by its Certified Public Accountant, appeared and testified. Both the Certified Public Accountant and the Petitioner's president testified as witnesses. The Respondent, represented by a Department of Revenue Tax Specialist II, appeared and testified. The Joined Party did not appear.

The record of the case, including the recording of the hearing and any exhibits submitted in evidence, is herewith transmitted. Proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law were not received.

**Issue:**

Whether services performed for the Petitioner by the Joined Party and other individuals as emergency medical oxygen inspectors constitute insured employment pursuant to Sections 443.036(19), 443.036(21); 443.1216, Florida Statutes, and if so, the effective date of the liability.

Whether the Petitioner meets liability requirements for Florida unemployment compensation contributions, and if so, the effective date of liability, pursuant to Sections 443.036(19); 443.036(21), Florida Statutes.

Whether the Petitioner's corporate officers received remuneration for employment which constitutes wages, pursuant to Sections 443.036(21), (44), Florida Statutes; Rule 60BB-2.025, Florida Administrative Code.

**Findings of Fact:**

1. The Petitioner is a subchapter S corporation which was formed in 1976 to operate a business that leases emergency medical oxygen units to businesses, such as hotels.
2. The Petitioner's president, Mel Fergenbaum, operated the business until October 2004 when he walked away from the business and relocated to North Carolina. The Petitioner's son, Mitchell Fergenbaum, and the son's wife, Stephanie Fergenbaum, are also officers of the corporation.
3. Prior to October 2004, possibly as early as 1985, the Petitioner engaged the Joined Party, Carolyn Potere, to perform inspections of the emergency medical oxygen units at the locations of the Petitioner's customers. The Petitioner's president determined how much the Petitioner would pay the Joined Party per inspection. The Petitioner also reimbursed the Joined Party for mileage. There was no written agreement between the Petitioner and the Joined Party.
4. The Petitioner's president has not had any involvement with the business since October 2004. The president has not spoken to the Joined Party or had any contact with the Joined Party since before October 2004.
5. In approximately 2009 the Petitioner hired a Certified Public Accountant to prepare the Petitioner's corporate income tax return at the end of each year. The Petitioner's Certified Public Accountant has never visited the Petitioner's business location. The Certified Public Accountant has never met nor spoken to the Joined Party.
6. At the end of 2010 the Petitioner reported the Joined Party's earnings for the year on Form 1099-MISC as nonemployee compensation in the amount of \$1,490.00.
7. The Joined Party filed a claim for unemployment compensation benefits effective July 3, 2011. The 2010 Form 1099 was submitted as proof of the Joined Party's earnings with the Petitioner. When the Joined Party did not receive credit for her earnings with the Petitioner a *Request for Reconsideration of Monetary Determination* was filed and an investigation was assigned to the Department of Revenue to determine if the Joined Party performed services for the Petitioner as an employee or as an independent contractor.
8. On September 21, 2011, the Department of Revenue issued a determination holding that the Joined Party and other individuals performing services for the Petitioner as emergency medical oxygen inspectors are employees of the Petitioner retroactive to July 1, 2006. The determination also advises that the wages for corporate officers are statutorily covered and are reportable for unemployment tax purposes. The Petitioner's Certified Public Accountant filed a timely protest by letter dated October 3, 2011.

**Conclusions of Law:**

9. The issue in this case, whether services performed for the Petitioner constitute employment subject to the Florida Unemployment Compensation Law, is governed by Chapter 443, Florida Statutes. Section 443.1216(1)(a)2., Florida Statutes, provides that employment subject to the chapter includes service performed by individuals under the usual common law rules applicable in determining an employer-employee relationship.
10. The Supreme Court of the United States held that the term "usual common law rules" is to be used in a generic sense to mean the "standards developed by the courts through the years of adjudication." United States v. W.M. Webb, Inc., 397 U.S. 179 (1970).

11. The Supreme Court of Florida adopted and approved the tests in 1 Restatement of Law, Agency 2d Section 220 (1958), for use to determine if an employment relationship exists. See Cantor v. Cochran, 184 So.2d 173 (Fla. 1966); Miami Herald Publishing Co. v. Kendall, 88 So.2d 276 (Fla. 1956); Magarian v. Southern Fruit Distributors, 1 So.2d 858 (Fla. 1941); see also Kane Furniture Corp. v. R. Miranda, 506 So.2d 1061 (Fla. 2d DCA 1987). In Brayshaw v. Agency for Workforce Innovation, et al; 58 So.3d 301 (Fla. 1st DCA 2011) the court stated that the statute does not refer to other rules or factors for determining the employment relationship and, therefore, the Agency is limited to applying only Florida common law in determining the nature of an employment relationship.
12. Restatement of Law is a publication, prepared under the auspices of the American Law Institute, which explains the meaning of the law with regard to various court rulings. The Restatement sets forth a nonexclusive list of factors that are to be considered when judging whether a relationship is an employment relationship or an independent contractor relationship.
13. 1 Restatement of Law, Agency 2d Section 220 (1958) provides:
  - (1) A servant is a person employed to perform services for another and who, in the performance of the services, is subject to the other's control or right of control.
  - (2) The following matters of fact, among others, are to be considered:
    - (a) the extent of control which, by the agreement, the business may exercise over the details of the work;
    - (b) whether or not the one employed is engaged in a distinct occupation or business;
    - (c) the kind of occupation, with reference to whether, in the locality, the work is usually done under the direction of the employer or by a specialist without supervision;
    - (d) the skill required in the particular occupation;
    - (e) whether the employer or the worker supplies the instrumentalities, tools, and the place of work for the person doing the work;
    - (f) the length of time for which the person is employed;
    - (g) the method of payment, whether by the time or by the job;
    - (h) whether or not the work is a part of the regular business of the employer;
    - (i) whether or not the parties believe they are creating the relation of master and servant;
    - (j) whether the principal is or is not in business.
14. Comments in the Restatement explain that the word "servant" does not exclusively connote manual labor, and the word "employee" has largely replaced "servant" in statutes dealing with various aspects of the working relationship between two parties.
15. In Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services v. Department of Labor & Employment Security, 472 So.2d 1284 (Fla. 1<sup>st</sup> DCA 1985) the court confirmed that the factors listed in the Restatement are the proper factors to be considered in determining whether an employer-employee relationship exists. However, in citing La Grande v. B&L Services, Inc., 432 So.2d 1364, 1366 (Fla. 1<sup>st</sup> DCA 1983), the court acknowledged that the question of whether a person is properly classified an employee or an independent contractor often can not be answered by reference to "hard and fast" rules, but rather must be addressed on a case-by-case basis.
16. In Adams v. Department of Labor and Employment Security, 458 So.2d 1161 (Fla. 1st DCA 1984), the Court held that if the person serving is merely subject to the control of the person being served as to the results to be obtained, he is an independent contractor. If the person serving is subject to the control of the person being served as to the means to be used, he is not an independent contractor. It is the right of control, not actual control or interference with the work which is significant in distinguishing between an independent contractor and a servant. The Court also determined that the Department had authority to make a determination applicable not only to

the worker whose unemployment benefit application initiated the investigation, but to all similarly situated workers.

17. In this case the Department of Revenue determined that the Joined Party performed services as an employee rather than as an independent contractor and extended the determination to include all emergency medical oxygen inspectors performing services for the Petitioner since July 1, 2006.
18. Rule 60BB-2.035(7), Florida Administrative Code, provides that the burden of proof will be on the protesting party to establish by a preponderance of the evidence that the determination was in error.
19. Section 90.604, Florida Statutes, sets out the general requirement that a witness must have personal knowledge regarding the subject matter of his or her testimony. Information or evidence received from other people and not witnessed firsthand is hearsay. Hearsay evidence may be used for the purpose of supplementing or explaining other evidence, but it is not sufficient, in and of itself, to support a finding unless it would be admissible over objection in civil actions. Section 120.57(1)(c), Florida Statutes.
20. The Petitioner's Certified Public Accountant testified that he has never visited the Petitioner's business and has never met nor spoken to the Joined Party. The Certified Public Accountant did not submit any records that might qualify as an exception to the hearsay rule. The testimony of the Certified Public Accountant is hearsay in regard to the terms and conditions under which the Joined Party performed services for the Petitioner and as such legally insufficient to support a finding of fact.
21. The Petitioner's president testified that he has not had any contact with the business and has not had any contact with the Joined Party since October 2004. He testified that he did not know if the Joined Party had performed services for the business since October 2004 but that he assumed that she had continued to perform services. Although the president's testimony is competent for the period of time prior to October 2004, his testimony for the relevant period of time beginning July 1, 2006, is hearsay and legally insufficient to establish that the Joined Party performed services as an independent contractor rather than an employee after July 1, 2006.
22. The Petitioner has failed to establish by a preponderance of competent evidence that the determination dated September 21, 2011, is in error.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the determination dated September 21, 2011, be AFFIRMED.

Respectfully submitted on January 27, 2012.



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R. O. SMITH, Special Deputy  
Office of Appeals