Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Semi-Truck Accident Lawyer

Hiring a truck accident attorney is a different decision from hiring a lawyer for a minor car crash. Tractor-trailer claims often involve federal safety regulations, electronic evidence and several insurance policies, and the trucking company often has its own lawyers and investigators involved from the start. These questions can make a first consultation more productive.

Confirm the license and disciplinary record

Before meeting a truck crash lawyer, confirm the basics. Every state bar or licensing agency offers a way to confirm that a lawyer is licensed and in good standing, and many publish disciplinary history. A listing in a directory or a badge from a **truck accident lawyer** rating publisher is a selection by that publisher, not a license check and not a prediction of results. If the crash occurred in another state, ask whether the lawyer is licensed there or plans to work with local counsel.

Questions about truck-specific experience

Ask how many tractor-trailer cases the lawyer has handled, and how recently. A truck crash attorney should be comfortable with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations in 49 CFR Parts 390-399, including hours-of-service rules, driver qualification files and inspection and maintenance records. Ask how the firm handles electronic evidence, such as ELD records, engine control module (ECM) downloads and dash camera video, and whether it retains accident reconstructionists. Ask whether the lawyer has taken truck cases to trial, because trial experience can affect how a case is prepared, even though most claims settle without a trial.

Understand the fee agreement

Many injury lawyers work on a contingency fee, which is a percentage of any recovery. ABA Model Rule 1.5(c), which many states have adopted https://truckaccidentlawyer.wiki/topics/claims-lawsuits-and-fees/ in some form, requires a contingent fee agreement to be in writing and signed by the client, and to state how the fee is calculated and whether expenses are deducted before or after the fee. Ask who pays case costs, such as filing fees and the cost of depositions and reconstruction work, if there is no recovery. Ask whether the percentage changes if a lawsuit is filed or the case goes to trial, and ask for a written closing statement at the end.

Who will handle the case

Ask whether the truck accident lawyer you meet will be the one who handles the case, who will work on it day to day and how often to expect updates. Some firms refer truck cases to other firms or co-counsel with them. ABA Model Rule 1.5(e) generally requires the client's agreement, confirmed in writing, before lawyers in different firms divide a fee, so the arrangement should be explained up front.

Documents worth bringing

A first meeting is more useful when the lawyer can see the documents. Bring the crash report, or the report number if the report is not ready yet, along with scene photos and the names of any witnesses. Letters from insurers, claim numbers and any forms already signed also matter, because they show who has been

contacted and what has been agreed to. Medical records and bills, along with pay stubs or other proof of missed work, help show the losses so far. A photo of the company name or USDOT number on the truck is also worth bringing.

Warning signs

Be cautious of anyone who promises a specific dollar amount at the first meeting. No lawyer can predict the outcome of a claim with certainty, and the rules on lawyer advertising prohibit false or misleading statements about a lawyer's services. A useful consultation focuses on the facts, the deadlines and the evidence that needs protecting. Ask which statute of limitations applies in the state where the crash happened, because every state sets its own. A commercial truck accident lawyer can explain that deadline in plain terms. This article is general information and not legal advice.