Choosing a Tractor-Trailer Crash Attorney: Questions to Ask

Picking a truck accident lawyer differs from picking a lawyer for a minor car crash. Tractor-trailer claims tend to involve federal safety regulations, electronic evidence and multiple insurance policies, and the trucking company often has its own lawyers and investigators *truck accident law firm* involved from the start. These questions can make a first consultation more productive.

Check the license and the 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 rating publisher is a selection by that publisher, rather than a license check or 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.

Ask about trucking 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 works with accident reconstructionists. Ask whether the lawyer has tried truck cases before a jury, because trial experience can affect how a case is prepared, even though most claims settle without a trial.

Fees and the written 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 follow 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 if there is no recovery, such as filing fees and the cost of depositions and reconstruction work. Ask whether the fee percentage changes if the case goes to trial, and ask for a written closing statement at the end.

Communication and staffing

Ask whether the truck accident attorney at the consultation will handle the case personally, who will work on it day to truck accident lawyers 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 to agree to a fee division between lawyers in different firms, with the agreement confirmed in writing, so the arrangement should be explained up front.

Preparing for the first meeting

A consultation goes further when the paperwork is on the table. Bring the police crash report or at least the report number, along with scene photos and the names of any witnesses. Insurance letters, claim numbers

and any forms already signed matter as well, because they show who has been contacted and what has been agreed to. Medical bills and records, plus pay stubs or other proof of missed work, help document the losses so far. If anyone photographed the company name or USDOT number on the truck, bring that photo too.

Red flags and realistic expectations

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 good consultation covers the facts, the deadlines and the evidence that needs protecting. Ask about the statute of limitations in the state where the crash happened, because every state sets its own. A semi-truck accident attorney should be able to explain that deadline in plain terms. This article is general information and not legal advice.