Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Truck Accident Attorney

Choosing a truck accident lawyer is a different task from choosing a lawyer for a minor fender bender. Tractor-trailer claims tend to involve federal safety regulations, electronic evidence and multiple insurance policies, and the trucking company frequently has lawyers and investigators working on the crash from the first days. These questions can make a first consultation more productive.

Start with the license

Before meeting with a truck accident attorney, check 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 directory listing or a badge from a rating publisher reflects that publisher's selection process, rather than a license check or a prediction of results. If the crash happened in another state, ask whether the lawyer is licensed there or will work with local counsel.

Ask about trucking experience

Ask how many tractor-trailer cases the lawyer has handled, and how recently. A truck accident attorney should be familiar 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 deals with 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 tried truck cases before a jury, since trial experience can affect how a case is prepared, even though most claims resolve without a trial.

Understand the fee agreement

Many injury lawyers work on a contingency fee, a percentage of any recovery. ABA Model Rule 1.5(c), which many states have adopted in some form, requires a contingent fee agreement to be in writing and signed by the client, and to explain how the fee is calculated and whether expenses come out 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 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 attorney at the consultation will handle the case personally, who will manage it day to day and how often updates will come. 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 at the start.

Documents worth bringing

A first meeting is **truck accident lawyer directory** 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 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.

What no lawyer can promise

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 is general information, not legal advice.