Choosing a Truck Accident Lawyer: Questions to Ask

Picking a truck accident lawyer differs from picking 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 frequently has lawyers and investigators working on the crash from the first days. These questions can make a first consultation more productive.

Confirm the license and disciplinary record

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 also publish public discipline truck accident lawyers records. A directory listing or a badge from a rating publisher reflects that publisher's selection process, 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.

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 taken truck cases to trial, because trial experience can affect how a case is prepared, even though most claims settle without a trial.

Read the fee agreement closely

Many injury lawyers **18 wheeler wreck 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 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 does the work

Ask whether the truck accident lawyer you meet will be the one who handles the case, 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.

Preparing for the first meeting

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, together with photos of the scene and contact details for 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. A photo of the company name or USDOT number on the truck is also worth bringing.

What no lawyer can promise

Be cautious of anyone who promises a specific dollar amount at the first meeting. No lawyer can know the outcome of a claim in advance, and lawyer advertising rules 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, since each 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.