Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Semi-Truck Accident Lawyer

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. Each state's bar or licensing agency provides a way to confirm that a lawyer is licensed and in good standing, and many also publish public discipline records. 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.

Questions about truck-specific 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 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 tried truck cases before a jury, 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 work on a contingency fee, which is 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, 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 https://truckaccidentlawyers.wiki/directory/metro-atlanta-law-firms/ or the case goes to trial, and ask about the written closing statement at the end of the case.

Who will handle the case

Ask whether the truck accident lawyer you **truck accident lawyers** 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 another firm or bring in co-counsel. 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 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. Letters from insurers, claim numbers and any forms already signed also matter, since they show who has made contact and what has already been agreed. 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 wary of anyone who promises a specific dollar figure at a 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 good consultation covers 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 can explain that deadline in plain terms. This is general information, not legal advice.