Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Semi-Truck Accident Lawyer

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. The questions below can make a consultation more useful.

Check the license and the record

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 listing in a directory or a badge from a 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 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 taken truck cases to trial, because trial experience can affect how a case is prepared, even though most claims resolve 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 explain how the fee is calculated and whether expenses come **semi truck accident lawyers** 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 fee percentage changes if the case goes to trial, and ask for a written closing statement at the end.

Who does the work

Ask whether the truck accident attorney at the consultation will handle the case personally, 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 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.

Documents worth bringing

A consultation goes further when the paperwork is on the table. 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, 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.

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 big rig accident lawyer should be able to explain that deadline in plain terms. This article is general information and not legal advice.