Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Truck Accident Lawyer

Hiring a truck accident attorney is a different decision from hiring 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.

Start with the license

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 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.

Experience with trucking regulations

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

Understand the fee 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 Informative post percentage changes if a lawsuit is filed or the truck accident lawyers 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 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, 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. A photo of the company name or USDOT number on the truck is also worth bringing.

Red flags and realistic expectations

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 commercial truck accident lawyer can explain that deadline in plain terms. This article is general information and not legal advice.