How to Choose a Truck Accident Attorney

Hiring a truck accident attorney is a different decision from hiring a lawyer for a minor car crash. Tractor-trailer claims tend to involve federal safety regulations, electronic evidence and multiple insurance policies, and the trucking company often has its own lawyers and investigators involved from the start. The questions below can make a consultation more useful.

Confirm the license and disciplinary 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 publish disciplinary history. 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 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 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, since trial experience can affect how a case is prepared, even though most claims resolve without a trial.

Read the fee agreement closely

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 about the written closing statement at the end of the case.

Communication and staffing

Ask whether the truck accident lawyer you 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 up front.

What to bring to the consultation

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. Insurance letters, claim numbers and any forms already signed matter as well, 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 cautious of anyone who promises a specific dollar amount at the first meeting. No https://atlantatruckaccidentlawyers.wiki/checking-a-firms-truck-practice/ lawyer can know the outcome of a claim in advance, 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 which statute of limitations applies 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 article is general information and not legal advice.