

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN INTERVIEWING ATTORNEYS FOR YOUR CLAIM

The best way to hire an attorney is to interview several. Yes, you are interviewing the attorney, they are not interviewing you. Bring your spouse or other family member to the meeting. These questions below can tell you a lot about the attorney you are interviewing. After you meet with a few pre-screened attorneys, THEN decide which one you think is the best for you.

1. DO YOU FOCUS ON JONES ACT AND MARITIME INJURY CASES?

When you need to see a doctor, you want to see a doctor that specializes in the type of injury that you have suffered. In the same way, you should hire a maritime lawyer who focuses his practice on handling Jones Act and maritime injury claims. Many "general practice" lawyers in your area are very nice and know a little bit about lots of different laws. Unfortunately, these lawyers typically are not experienced enough with complicated Jones Act and maritime laws to truly handle a maritime injury claim.

2. DO YOU HAVE EXTENSIVE COURTROOM EXPERIENCE?

It is amazing how many attorneys never actually go to court to argue motions or try cases before judges and juries. Maritime lawsuits are defended by the insurance companies and company lawyers. These company lawyers will fight every issue in your maritime case and this often involves arguing motions before the court. Very often Jones Act and maritime cases are prepared all the way up until the point of trial at which time a fair settlement can finally be reached. If not, your case will need to be presented to a jury. Your maritime injury lawyer will most likely spend as much time in court on your case as he will working on the case outside of court. It is very important that your attorney have extensive courtroom experience so that he can successfully handle your case.

3. DO YOU HAVE SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL RESOURCES (MONEY!)?

Your maritime injury claim will be expensive to successfully present to a judge or jury. Typically your claim will involve loss of past and future wages and fringe benefits. An economic expert is necessary to testify regarding this issue at trial. Your case may require a liability expert to show what the company did wrong to cause your injury. These experts require payment up front and your maritime attorney will be responsible for hiring and funding these experts until your case can settle. For every dollar that the company spends in an effort to defend your claim, your attorney must be prepared to finance your case in a similar way.

4. DO YOU HAVE SIGNIFICANT OFFICE RESOURCES (A GREAT TEAM)?

Your maritime injury claim will require office resources and skills as well as financial resources. In order to successfully prove your case, hours and hours of effort and work will be spent in accumulating the necessary documents and obtaining the necessary testimony

to prove your case at trial. This work includes getting all of your medical and work records, arranging and paying for medical treatment so that you can prove your injury, hiring and working with experts in regard to your damages as well as the fault of the company, scheduling and taking depositions from key witnesses, and organizing all of these documents and information so that they can be successfully presented at court. Your maritime attorney needs to have an office staff that is experienced and able to prepare your case.

5. ARE YOU READY TO FULLY PREPARE MY CASE?

This may be one of the most important requirements of your maritime injury attorney. Very often successful attorneys will have significant financial resources and office staff and they even have experience handling maritime claims. However, many of these attorneys will accept lots of cases but truly pursue only a few of these cases. In other words, they may accept your claim and if they eventually determine that they do not view your case as a "high dollar case", they may limit their work on your case. Your attorney must be ready to fully prepare your case for trial. When you hire your attorney, you should ask if he is truly ready and able to fully prepare your case in order to obtain a good settlement or trial result.

6. DO YOU HAVE GOOD CLIENT TESTIMONIALS/REVIEWS AND CASE RESULTS?

A good maritime attorney will inevitably have clients who provide feedback on their services. It's important that you look for any reviews or testimonials both on the attorney website and on other unbiased websites.

7. ARE YOU RESPECTED BY OTHER ATTORNEYS?

One of the primary things you want to consider is whether or not other attorneys refer maritime cases to the attorney that you are considering. The Young Firm has been referred hundreds of maritime cases throughout the years from attorneys across the country, which means that those attorneys trust us enough, and know that The Young Firm knows maritime law well enough that they will turn over their cases to our firm to take on. One valuable question you can ask is, "Are you referred Jones Act or Maritime cases from other attorneys?" Sometimes, you may even be talking to the attorney who will actually refer your case out to someone else – and that's important for you to know, too. The Young Firm is proud to say that attorneys nationwide trust us enough to take on their maritime cases.

OTHER QUESTIONS TO ASK

- *How many maritime cases have you personally handled?*
- *How many Jones Act claims have you won?*
- *What percentage of your practice is offshore or maritime related?*
- *Do you only help injured people or do you defend companies for money?*
- *Will you handle my case or will you refer my case to another lawyer, if so who?*
- *How long will my case take?*
- *When did you last try a case in court (if you need a lawyer at trial make sure it is not his first trial)?*
- *Can you give me the names of several offshore clients I can call and speak with about you?*
- *How will you prove my damages at trial and what experts will you use to do so?*
- *What kind of compensation do your clients usually receive?*
- *How much do you charge?*

CONSIDER THESE FACTORS

TYPES OF CASES TRIED – Look for a maritime lawyer who has experience in your specific type of case. If you were injured on an oil rig, ensure the lawyer you choose has a good background in trying oil rig injury cases under maritime law.

RESULTS AND SUCCESS RATE – Talk to potential lawyers about their success rates for cases like yours. Did they settle in or out of court? How much was the plaintiff awarded? Ask them for an evaluation of your own case.

MARTINDALE HUBBEL RATING & AVVO – Martindale Hubbel & AVVO uses peer reviews as well as client reviews to rate lawyers' services. You'll want to look for an attorney with a favorable rating.

COMMUNICATION AND FEES – Ensure you're clear on how fees and retainers will work with each maritime lawyer you speak to and that these fees fit your budget. Also, speak to potential lawyers about their communication policies; how will you communicate with them if you have new case information? Moreover, how will they keep you apprised of status updates?

WATCH OUT FOR THIS!

Remember, it is your case, not the lawyer's case. If you feel as if someone wants to 'take' your case and is lobbying for it and pressuring you to 'give' them your case, this may be a red flag. Sometimes the least qualified attorneys are desperate and will go to illegal, unethical lengths to get a case.

If any attorney (or anyone else for that matter) is offering cash money to represent you, this should also be a red flag. No lawyer should be paying a non-lawyer to encourage someone else (you) to hire that lawyer. If someone is trying to sell you on a particular lawyer in your area, you may want to make sure they are not getting paid anything by the lawyer.