What Types of Experts Are Used in Truck Accident Cases?

The Expert Witnesses Who Help Prove Fault and Damages After a Georgia Truck Wreck

Truck accident cases in Georgia often turn on expert witnesses. They can explain the seconds before impact and the trucking company decisions made months earlier. A Georgia truck accident claim may call on accident reconstruction experts, data analysts, trucking safety experts, mechanics, and doctors. Each one answers a different question about fault or harm.

“These cases are different,” Gary Martin Hays said during a Power Hour segment on 97.1 The River. “It’s not just the sheer size and weight of these vehicles. The attorney has to know the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Rules that apply along with Georgia’s rules.”

Building the right team is daily work for the Georgia truck wreck lawyers of Gary Martin Hays, LLC. Gary co-wrote a book on tractor-trailer wreck claims in Georgia. He also represented insurance companies before he began fighting for injured people. That background shows him how trucking companies defend these cases.

Quick Facts

- **Driver Logs Have a Short Shelf Life** – Federal rules require carriers to keep hours-of-service records and supporting documents for only six months.
- **Maintenance Files Last a Little Longer** – Inspection and repair records must be kept for one year, plus six months after a truck leaves the carrier’s control.
- **Driver Files Follow the Employee** – A driver qualification file must be kept during employment and for three years after the driver leaves.
- **Georgia Judges Screen Expert Testimony** – Under O.C.G.A. § 24-7-702, a judge can decide whether an expert’s methods are reliable before a jury hears them.
- **The Duty to Preserve Can Start Early** – A trucking company may have to save evidence once a lawsuit is reasonably foreseeable, even before anyone files suit.

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Wslncc_Ebcw

Why Truck Cases Need More Than One Kind of Expert

A car crash case often centers on what two drivers did. A truck case adds a motor carrier, federal safety rules, and electronic records that most juries have never seen. Gary explained that the firm’s investigation “actually starts before the wreck happened,” with questions about the company itself.

“What kind of training process did they have in place? And how did they supervise the drivers?” Gary asked. Those questions matter because inadequate truck driver training can expose a carrier to its own liability. “We use the Federal Motor Carrier standards to prove liability against the truck driver, the trucking company,” he said.

Common Expert Witnesses in a Georgia Truck Accident Case

Not every case needs every type of expert. The right team depends on how the crash happened and what the trucking company's records show. It also depends on how serious the injuries are and how hard the carrier fights. These roles come up most often in Georgia tractor-trailer cases.

Type of Expert	What They Examine	Questions They Help Answer
Accident Reconstructionist	Scene measurements, vehicle damage, skid and gouge marks, and video	How fast were the vehicles going, and who had time to react?
Electronic Data Analyst	Engine control module data, electronic logging device records, and telematics	Was the driver speeding, braking late, or over the hours limit?
Trucking Safety Expert	Hiring files, training records, dispatch practices, and safety policies	Did the carrier follow federal rules and industry standards?
Truck Mechanic or Engineer	Brakes, tires, steering, lighting, and maintenance history	Did a mechanical failure cause or worsen the crash?
Toxicologist	Post-crash drug and alcohol test results and testing timelines	Was the driver impaired, and was testing done on time?
Treating Physicians	Imaging, surgical records, and treatment plans	What injuries did the crash cause, and what care lies ahead?
Life Care Planner	Future medical, equipment, and home care needs	What will lifelong care cost?
Vocational Specialist and Economist	Work history, skills, wages, and benefits	How much income will the injury take away?

How Reconstruction Puts the Wreck Back Together

Reconstruction starts with evidence that can vanish within days. Gary described sending "my fast strike team out there to take photos of the scene, to take videos of the scene." Investigators also talk with first responders and witnesses. That early work gives a reconstructionist the raw material to measure.

"We may even have to do an accident reconstruction to come in and really understand what happened in the wreck," Gary said. Accident reconstruction in a Georgia truck crash combines physics, crush analysis, and video. Matched with the truck's own electronic data, it can test each driver's version of events.

Data Analysts and the Six-Month Clock

Modern trucks record a great deal about themselves. Black box data from the engine control module can show speed, throttle, and braking before a crash. Electronic logging devices track

driving time against federal hours-of-service limits. A data analyst knows how to download, read, and explain both.

Those logs don't last long. According to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), carriers must keep duty status records and supporting documents for six months. After that, they can be gone for good. Analysts also look for signs of electronic logging device tampering and false logs.

"We've got to act quickly before they destroy photos that they may have," Gary said. "Before they destroy the driver's logs." In *Phillips v. Harmon*, the Georgia Supreme Court held that a duty to preserve evidence can arise once litigation is reasonably foreseeable. Courts can respond when a company destroys truck accident evidence it should have kept.

Trucking Safety Experts and the Company's Paper Trail

A trucking safety expert reads the carrier's files the way a regulator would. Federal rules require carriers to keep a driver qualification file while the driver works there and for three years after. That file can reveal a driver's history, medical certification, and past violations.

Inspection, repair, and maintenance records must be kept for one year, plus six months after the truck leaves the carrier's control. Poor truck maintenance records can show a pattern of skipped repairs. A mechanic or engineer can then tie that pattern to the failure that caused the crash.

Toxicology can matter too. Federal rules set tight windows for post-accident drug testing in Georgia truck crash cases, and carriers don't always meet them. A toxicologist can explain what a late test, or a missing one, means for the evidence of impairment and for the carrier's own compliance.

Medical and Financial Witnesses Who Measure the Harm

Proving fault is only half of a truck case. The other half is showing what the crash took from the injured person, now and in the years ahead. Trial testimony from treating physicians can carry real weight with a jury. Those doctors know the patient's condition firsthand.

For catastrophic injuries, a life care planner maps out future surgeries, therapy, equipment, and home care. Vocational experts and economists then calculate lost earning capacity. Together, they show a jury the long-term cost in real numbers instead of guesses. That matters because insurers often lowball future care.

Will a Georgia Court Allow the Testimony?

Georgia applies a reliability test to expert testimony. Under O.C.G.A. § 24-7-702, an expert's opinion must rest on sufficient facts or data and reliable principles and methods. The expert must also apply those methods reliably to the facts of the case, or the jury may never hear the opinion.

Either side can ask for a pretrial hearing to challenge an expert. Trucking companies and their insurers often use these hearings to try to keep damaging testimony away from a jury. Careful selection and preparation of each expert helps that testimony hold up when it's challenged.

Here's How the Pieces Can Fit Together

Imagine a tractor-trailer slamming into an SUV stopped in an I-285 work zone in DeKalb County. The truck driver tells police the SUV cut in front of him. Without more, the case could become

one driver's word against another's. Meanwhile, the trucking company's insurer pushes its version from day one.

A reconstructionist could measure the scene and the crush damage. A data analyst could pull engine data showing the truck well over the work zone limit with no braking until the last second. The electronic logs might show the driver past the federal 11-hour driving limit. A trucking safety expert could then trace that to dispatch pressure.

Building the Team Before the Evidence Disappears

Trucking companies move fast after a serious wreck. Gary has seen it from the insurance side. He said "these trucking companies will have their team of lawyers out there immediately to make sure they're protecting the trucking company." "So, without a doubt, these cases are highly specialized," Gary said. "It involves a lot of time and frankly a lot of money to put them together the right way."

Our team puts the right experts to work early, so injured people can focus on recovering instead of chasing evidence. Were you hurt in a Georgia truck wreck? Talk with our truck accident team about protecting the evidence. A free consultation can help you learn more about your legal rights and options.