

A special government program to improve worker safety in hazardous industries rarely fulfilled its promise, a Labor Department audit concluded yesterday, and over the past six years, **dozens of deaths occurred at firms that should have been subjected to much tighter federal safety enforcement.**

The study found that officials failed to gather needed data, conducted uneven inspections and enforcement, and sometimes failed to discern repeat fatalities because records misspelled the companies' names or failed to notice when two subsidiaries with the same owner were involved.

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