

Lawmakers Probe Gaps in Fertilizer Plant Rules

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Honor guard stand in front of caskets prior to a memorial service for first responders who died in last week's fertilizer plant explosion in West, Texas, Thursday, April 25, 2013, in Waco, Texas. President Barack Obama, U.S. Sen. John Cornyn and Texas Gov. Rick Perry are set to speak at Thursday's memorial at Baylor University's Ferrell Center in Waco. Firefighters and other first responders were among those killed when a fire at the plant erupted in an explosion last week. Hundreds of people were injured. (AP Photo/Eric Gay)

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top congressional Democrats are examining whether gaps in federal regulations might be placing at risk those who work and live near more than 6,000 fertilizer plants like the one that exploded in West, Texas.

The probe comes as investigators try to determine what caused the April 17 fire and explosion that killed 14 and injured hundreds.

California Rep. George Miller, top Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, also is asking the Government Accountability Office to examine whether the Texas plant was exempt from certain regulations and why.

Some plants with 10 or fewer employees are exempt from oversight by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. A spokesman says the Texas plants had 13 employees when the accident occurred, but state records show it had only seven.

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