

No criminal investigation planned into faked lab results

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No criminal investigation is planned after a worker at a federal laboratory in Colorado was accused of intentionally manipulating test results, potentially tainting research on energy and toxic chemicals, officials said Tuesday.

The Interior Department, which oversees the lab, would have to first conduct an additional review before it could request a criminal inquiry by the Justice Department, said Gillian Carroll, a spokeswoman for the Interior Department's Office of Inspector General.

Interior has no plans for another review because the employee no longer works at the lab, she said. The initial review was intended only to give the U.S. Geological Survey—an Interior Department agency that runs the lab—details of the incident, Carroll said.

It wasn't clear if the employee resigned or was fired. His name hasn't been released.

The inspector general's office reported last month the manipulation occurred at the USGS Energy Geochemistry Laboratory in the Denver suburb of Lakewood.

USGS said it wasn't sure why the employee manipulated the results of chemical analyses but said it wasn't for personal gain. A notice on the agency's website said the manipulation was done in part to correct calibration failures in the instrument being used, a mass spectrometer.

The falsified data may have affected 24 projects costing a combined \$108 million. Topics included toxic metals in the Everglades, uranium near the Grand Canyon and coal in Afghanistan.

Researchers, lawmakers and regulators rely on USGS data, and the [inspector general](#)'s report warned the falsified results from the Colorado lab could erode confidence in the entire agency.

USGS said it did not believe the tainted data affected any decisions by lawmakers or regulators.

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