

7 May 2026

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Tēnā koe Nigel

## Your request for official information, reference: HNZ00202370

Thank you for your email on 8 April 2026, asking Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora for the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA):

*"Official Information Request – Definitions of "Safe" and "Effective" in Public Health Communications. I note that the Department of Conservation uses the phrase "safe and effective" in its public facing material describing sodium fluoroacetate (1080). To understand how these terms are used across government agencies, I request the following information from the Ministry of Health:*

*1. Definitions and criteria*

*Please provide the Ministry of Health's definitions, criteria, or internal guidance for the use of the terms:*

*"safe"*

*"effective"*

*"safe and effective"*

*in public facing health communications.*

*2. Application to vaccines*

*Please provide any documents, guidance, or communication frameworks that informed the Ministry's use of these terms in relation to COVID 19 vaccines.*

*3. Consistency of terminology*

*Please provide any documents, emails, or internal discussions held by the Ministry that address whether the Ministry's definitions or criteria for "safe" and "effective" differ from, or align with, the usage of these terms by other government agencies (including DOC), in relation to hazardous substances such as 1080."*

## Response

Health NZ does not hold definitions, criteria, or internal guidance for these terms. Instead, we use the plain English definitions in accordance with the Oxford dictionary. When we use the terms "safe and effective" in relation to medicines and vaccines, it is based on Medsafe's statutory assessment framework, not on bespoke definitions held by Health NZ. "Safe and effective" means approved by Medsafe under the Medicines Act, rather than meeting a separately defined threshold set by Health NZ.

Medsafe is New Zealand's medicines and medical devices safety authority and is responsible for the evaluation and approval of medicines and vaccine applications. All medicines and vaccines must meet standards for safety, quality, and efficacy before they are approved for use in New Zealand. Medsafe's assessment considers the totality of evidence and whether the vaccine has a favourable benefit–risk profile for the intended use.

In addition, the Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring (CARM), operated by the New Zealand Pharmacovigilance Centre, receives and monitors reports of adverse reactions to medicines and vaccines. This ongoing surveillance supports continued monitoring of vaccine safety after approval, and enables follow-up and action where required.

An email sweep has been completed to check for any correspondence between Health NZ and other agencies regarding alignment around the use of the phrase “safe and effective”, and no correspondence in scope of your request has been identified. That information is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the OIA as it does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

### **How to get in touch**

If you have any questions, you can contact us at [h.nzOIA@tewhatuora.govt.nz](mailto:h.nzOIA@tewhatuora.govt.nz). If you are not happy with this response, you have the right to make a complaint to the Ombudsman. Information about how to do this is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by phoning 0800 802 602.

As this information may be of interest to other members of the public, Health NZ may proactively release a copy of this response on our website. All requester data, including your name and contact details, will be removed prior to release.

Nāku iti noa, nā



**Sara Freitag**

**Manager, Government Services**