

Weight of containers has to be verified

New regulation requires Verified Gross Mass (VGM) for packed containers

Dear Customer,

In recent years, the industry has seen some major incidents at sea and on shore arising from packed containers that had incorrect weight declarations.

As a consequence, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) passed amendments to the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention that requires packed containers' gross mass to be verified prior to stowage aboard ship.

What will change?

This new regulation, effective as global law, prohibits loading of a packed container in absence of the verified gross mass (VGM). This applies to all packed containers which are to be loaded to a vessel under SOLAS regime in international maritime traffic.

What happens if a VGM is not submitted?

A packed container, for which the verified gross mass has not been obtained, will not be loaded on the vessel. Loading of a packed container without VGM to a vessel is an offence against an existing SOLAS regulation.

Who will benefit from this new legislation?

All parties along the supply chain will benefit from the new rules:

Shippers: Reduced risk of damages to their cargo

Carriers: Increased safety for crew and vessel by improved stowage.

Time savings by reduced re-stows and avoidance of last minute cancellations

Terminals: Implementation of a better pre-stow, improved and accelerated dispatch and minimized last minute changes.

Generally, the industry will face fewer delays and a safer working environment.

This regulation will significantly increase safety and transport quality in the supply chain.



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How to determine the VGM?

The SOLAS regulation prescribes two methods by which the shipper may obtain the verified gross mass of a packed container.

1. The shipper may weigh the packed and sealed container using calibrated and certified equipment.
2. The shipper may add the weight of each package stuffed in the container, add the packing and securing material and add the tare weight of the utilized container. The method itself needs to be certified and approved by a national regulatory body. An estimation of weight is not permitted.

The weight, thus calculated, shall be submitted to the carrier.

What do shippers need to do and how will the VGM be submitted to carriers?

The VGM details need to be provided via SAIL to the carrier sufficiently in advance of vessel loading. The responsibility for obtaining and providing the verified gross mass lies with the shipper.

Global standards for proper electronic processing of data along the entire supply chain are presently being worked out in co-operation with Carriers and Providers (i.e. INTTRA, dbh, Dakosy).

Which Public Authorities are responsible?

In Germany, the Berufsgenossenschaft Verkehrswirtschaft (BG Verkehr) has been nominated to monitor the execution of this new regulation. Both the United States and UK have nominated their National Coast Guards as the regulatory body.

When will the new role be effective?

The original effective date is July 1st 2016.

SAIL will be happy to provide further information and more details about this new regulation. If you should need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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