

SOLAS Verified Gross Mass Mandatory Rule Advisory

for Ocean Shipments

13 April 2016

As a response to several major incidents at sea and numerous incidents occurring at ports due to overweight containers and/or misdeclared container weights, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has amended the Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS) to require shippers to declare a Verified Gross Mass (VGM) of packed containers prior to the container being loaded onboard. The amendment will come into full effect 1 July 2016.

The amendments to [SOLAS Chapter VI, Part A, Regulation 2](#) require the VGM of the loaded shipping container to be verified by the shipper and then supplied to the Vessel Operator prior to being approved to load onto the vessel. Shippers can obtain the VGM by one of two methods outlined by SOLAS:

Method 1: Weighing

Once the container is loaded and sealed, the shipper may weigh or arrange to have a third party weigh the packed container minus the truck, fuel and chassis weight to obtain the VGM.

Method 2: Calculating

The shipper may weigh all packages and cargo items (including loading materials such as pallets) to be loaded into the container and add the tare weight of the container found shown on the outside of the container to obtain the VGM.

Noncompliance with the new requirement after 1 July 2016 will result in the Vessel Operator refusing to load the container therefore delaying the shipment and causing roll fees and demurrage charges. Some ports will adopt a 'No VGM, No gate-in' policy. If the VGM is not received at these ports prior to the container being returned full, the Marine Terminal Operators will refuse the container. This will result in extra truck/dry run charges and possible roll and demurrage fees. In the case of containers being delivered to a 'No VGM, No gate-in' port via IPI rail, the VGM requirement does not affect the rail transportation but noncompliance prior to reaching the port could result in excess charges from the rail including repositioning, storage, dray, etc.

Extra charges will be limited to those assessed by carriers and port terminals. The United States Coast Guard (USCG) has confirmed they will not be imposing fines on shippers in regards to the new regulations. As the U.S. Port Authority under SOLAS, the USCG limits its enforcement to ensuring vessels and vessel operators are in compliance with SOLAS regulations.

Regardless of your sales terms, costs accrued due to noncompliance will be assessed to the shipper (e.g. weighing costs, repacking, storage, demurrage, administrative costs).



As your freight forwarder and NVOCC, Harbour is focused on making the implementation of this new regulation as seamless as possible so you can avoid any unnecessary extra costs and delays. Harbour has chosen to make a soft implementation of the regulation beginning 1 June 2016 to ensure a firm process is in place prior to SOLAS enforcement.

Beginning 1 June 2016, Harbour is asking for the VGM and shipper-authorized signature to be included in your shipper's documents for all Ocean Full Container Shipments. For your convenience, we've included a weight certificate that may be used as a cover letter in addition to your regular documents, or you can add these data elements to your current method as long as the information is clear.

After Harbour receives the VGM from you, we will ensure this is reported by the correct means to the Vessel Operators of the steamship line in advance of their requirements.

Should you have any questions, please let us know. Shippers, carriers, and other authorities are still developing their processes to prepare for this new regulation so as new information becomes available, we will keep you informed.

Harbour thanks you for your continued compliance and support,

Danielle Rosenquist
Harbour Export Compliance

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