

A NEW REGULATION FOR A SAFER SUPPLY CHAIN

VERIFIED GROSS MASS EFFECTIVE FROM 1ST JULY 2016

In November 2014, the International Maritime Organization adopted an amendment to the Safety of Life at Sea convention (SOLAS) regarding mandatory container weight verification. The amendment applies to all member states who will, in turn, adopt it into their own national law. Each country will provide its own guidelines for the implementation.



1. The Situation

Today, weight declarations of loaded containers are not always accurate. This leads to an increased risk of accidents throughout the supply chain.



2. The Challenge

From July 1st 2016, Shippers will be required to provide the Verified Gross Mass (VGM) of each shipment to their ocean carrier and the terminal operator. It remains the shippers' responsibility to obtain and provide the VGM in accordance with local government guidelines and before the carrier's cut off.



3. The Implication

SOLAS rules state that if a Shipper fails to provide a VGM to the ocean carrier and the terminal operator, the container cannot be loaded on-board the vessel. In this case, the Shipper is accountable for any additional charges. Shippers may authorise a third party to provide the VGM, however, shippers remain responsible for the process.



4. Weight Definition

VGM is determined by using the following methods:

Method 1: Weighing the packed container once all cargo has been loaded & sealed in to the container.

Method 2: by calculating the weight of the cargo (including packaging), dunnage and the container tare.

MSC recommend that shippers keep a record of VGM's for requests by authorities.



5. Empty container weight (container tare weight)

The container tare weight can be checked in two ways:

- The tare weight is physically printed on the outside of the container doors
- In the case of method 2, the container tare weight lookup on myMSC.com



6. Worldwide Procedures

Procedures will vary by country, please see attached document with the relevant information.

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7. Government approval status

- The authority in charge of compliance in Malta is Transport Malta™ as the Regulating Authority
- Verified Gross Mass regulations will be enforced with effect from the 1st July 2016 but as yet no fines or penalties have been announced as yet for any default.
- There will be various controls to ensure compliance. No container will be loaded unless the VGM of the container is declared in advance of loading.
- All Shippers who will be adopting Method 2 are required to send their certificate and a copy of their documented procedures to the regulating authority for vetting. Once this has been approved, the shipper will be included in the list referring to the use of method 2 on the Malta Freeport Terminal (MFT) web based portal.
- Gates procedures have been defined for both methods. M1 requires the presentation of a printed weight certificate in addition to the standard shipping documents whilst M2 requires that a document is presented at the Gate which includes the of the Certified body, the Verified gross mass and the Shipper's contact details. Same report is to be dated and signed.

8. What to include in your VGM instructions

The following items are mandatory and must be on all VGM instructions

- Booking or Bill of Lading number
- Container number
- VGM + unit

- Authorized person's signatory (submitter of the VGM who may be authorized to act on behalf of shippers
- Responsible party Name

9. How to submit your VGM instructions

- Fax, emails
- Standard signed shipping instructions

10. Deadlines for sending your VGM instructions

- 24 hours of ETA
- VGM cut-off as may be adjusted on an ad hoc basis. Shippers to be informed and kept updated.

11. Recommendations

- Extra costs, penalties and fines which might be imposed by the local authorities, port and/or shipping lines for misdeclarations, late submissions or additional amendments may be incurred and will be for account of the Shipper.
- Extra costs for failing to provide timely VGM as per carrier's VGM cut-off and countries guidelines may be incurred and will be for account of the Shipper.

12. Recommendations

- Shippers are advised to retain all the VGM related documents within their records whilst copies must be forward to the shipping agent.
- MSC Local agency should be informed in advance about the appointment of 3rd parties to provide the VGM if the Shipper chooses to do so.

- Shippers are recommended to liaise closely with the shipping agent in case of any difficulty in securing a timely VGM.

13. Contact information

- Customer Help Desk: shipping@jripard.com
- MSC contact person: Joanne Borg, Joseph Chetcuti