

News

SOLAS to require verified weight for containers

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WHAT IS SOLAS?

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has amended the Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS) to require, as a condition for loading a packed container onto a ship for export, that the container has a verified weight.

The shipper is responsible for the verification of the packed container's weight. This requirement will become legally effective on July 1, 2016. After that date, it would be a violation of SOLAS to load a packed container onto a vessel if the vessel operator and marine terminal operator do not have a verified container weight.

HOW?
The verified weight may be retrieved using one of two methods. It is the shipper who decides which method to use:

1. The entire stuffed container is weighed on a certified scale. What is defined as a certified scale is regulated by each country's authorities as well as which scales are "certified" will be determined by local authorities.
2. All cargo individually, including damage and materials used in weighing while stuffing containers, and when the loading is completed, the container tare is added. The precision of weight may differ from country to country. The shipper is responsible to secure proper and correct information what is used.

WHY?
The shipper is always responsible for the verification of the gross mass of a container as well as for ensuring that the VGM is communicated to the carrier. The carrier staff is not obliged to cross-check the VGM received. Independent of the party verifying and sending the VGM, it remains in the responsibility of the shipper that the carrier and terminal operator receive the information in time.

WHY?
As stated the shipper is responsible for the verification of the weight but since we, as the forwarder, are looking for containers with the various carriers we need to have a back to back agreement with our customers to clarify any uncertainties.

LIABILITY
The Carrier is prohibited to load a container without a VGM unless the vessel operator has been advised. The shipper will be the SOLAS responsible for any loss that also may be related to weighing costs, repacking, storage, demurrage and administrative costs. Regulatory penalties will be defined by the individual national regulations.

LOCAL REGULATIONS
There is no mandatory format for the VGM but the information should be in line with SOLAS. It is not expected to introduce one other, but the carrier may standardize the requirements globally or locally in due time. Verified gross weight is required prior to loading the container on board the vessel, include also the temperature on feeder vessels.

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