

The International Maritime Organization (IMO), in collaboration with industry representatives, has developed a new regulation that will soon be part of the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention. Beginning July 1, 2016, the Verified Gross Mass (VGM) regulation, which requires shippers to certify the weight of their containers before they are loaded onto vessels (gate-in or off-rail), will go into effect for all 171 member states of the IMO. Local state authorities responsible for maritime affairs will enforce this policy.

The Shipper (listed in the bill of lading) is the party responsible for providing the VGM of the container to the carrier and port terminal representative in a timely manner before vessel loading, regardless of who may have packed the cargo into the container. Carriers and terminal operators will not permit loaded containers to board a vessel without an electronic or hard-copy VGM confirmation that is signed by an authorized shipper's representative. The cargo may be returned to the shipper or stowed in the port at the terminal's discretion. For additional information, please click [here](#).

Carriers state that the new regulation is required because overloaded containers frequently damage cargo and even cause ships to capsize if the weight is inaccurately recorded. An overweight container placed on top of a stack may crush the other containers beneath it, putting a vessel in danger. The requirement will not only protect the vessel and its cargo but also increase safety for terminal workers and vessel crew.

According to the [World Shipping Council](#), an estimated average of 1,700 containers per year were lost at sea between 2008 and 2013. Although such losses are a small fraction of the over 120 million containers shipped annually, it is still a major concern the carriers want to address and prevent in the future, especially now that shipping lines are utilizing larger ships capable of carrying as many as 20,000 containers.



There are two guidelines provided by SOLAS to implement VGM calculation:

- 1) Weigh the entire loaded container; Or,
- 2) Weigh all goods, packaging and dunnage material, and then add the tare weight of the container (standards, tanks, flat racks, or bulk)

The VGM weight tolerance is yet to be determined, but experts speculate it to be 5% from actual weight, with a maximum variation of 500 kilograms.

Despite the major impact on the industry, the effective date of the new regulation has not been postponed by IMO members. The time to implement VGM methodologies and requirements is short and KWE is working closely with its customers, terminal partner carriers, terminal operators and e-commerce hubs to have the standards and processes in place before July. As details are still being worked out on how to document, certify and communicate the VGM to the necessary parties, KWE will keep you informed of further developments as they arise.

*Please contact your local KWE branch if you have further inquiries.*

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