



The SOLAS Container Weight Verification Requirement



Kuehne + Nagel wishes to inform our customers that the container weight verification global requirement as outlined by the Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS) will begin being enforced on July 1, 2016. As shippers, you will be responsible for the verification of the packed container's weight and run the risk of missing an intended sailing if Verified Gross Mass (VGM) documentation compliance is ignored.

Our Kuehne + Nagel teams globally are closely cooperating with partner carriers and e-commerce hubs in order to have standards and processes in place. If you have any questions regarding the upcoming SOLAS container weight verification requirement, please contact your local Kuehne + Nagel representative.

INTRODUCTION:

Major incidents and accidents resulting from overweight containers have prompted the international shipping community to take action in order to prevent incorrect weight declarations. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) in collaboration with industry representatives has therefore adopted specific rules as part of the SOLAS Convention. The purpose of the VGM requirement is to obtain an accurate gross weight of packed containers so that vessel and terminal operators can prepare vessel stowage plans prior to loading cargo on ships. The requirement will protect vessel and terminal operators' people and assets, as well as shippers' cargo.

The VGM regulation will impact the communication, infrastructure and processes of all participants in the supply chain. The time for having the "VGM" methodologies and requirements implemented is short and Kuehne + Nagel is closely working with its partner carriers and e-commerce hubs to have processes in place. VGM is required prior to shipment. Cargo will not be loaded onto a vessel unless a certified VGM is provided.

ADMINISTRATION ON NATIONAL LEVEL:

SOLAS is part of the IMO (International Maritime Organization, a United Nations Agency). All states (countries) which are members of the IMO have to adopt these VGM rules either in their original form or with additional requirements in accordance with local/national laws or rules.

Enforcement and "policing" of the VGM rules remain with the local state (government) authorities, responsible for maritime affairs (e.g. Coast Guard in the U.S., Maritime & Coastguard Agency in the U.K., etc.).

GENERAL INFORMATION:

The implementation of the SOLAS VGM is very dynamic due to local conditions and requirements, infrastructural challenges and the global scope. The effective date of July 1st, 2016, is not expected to be postponed. Therefore, shippers should be ready to comply with SOLAS already in June 2016.

The container tare weight is imprinted on the container and some carriers make it available on their web sites. The official container weight can vary as a result of its current condition (e.g. wet wooden floors, as a result of repairs etc.).

VGM weight tolerance is under consideration. Numbers mentioned but not confirmed are 5% with maximum of 500 Kos.

The shipping industry is working on globalized standards for electronic transmission of required data.

For more detailed information, see the World Shipping Counsel website: <http://www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/cargo-weight>.

REQUIREMENTS:

- The Shipper (listed as shipper in the bill of lading or sea waybill) is responsible for providing the VGM to the carrier in reasonable time prior to vessel loading.
- The VGM consists of cargo weight including packaging and dunnage (securing) materials and tare weight of container.
- The Carrier is responsible for relaying the VGM to its terminal.
- Container means standard containers, tank containers, flat racks and bulk containers.
- The NVOCC is the shipper vis-à-vis the carrier and, therefore, responsible for providing the VGM to the carrier.
- The Data to be provided to the carrier consists of the VGM and the shipper's (Individual's) authorized signature (can be electronic). Local/national Laws/Rules might require additional data, processes or documents (e.g. weighing note).
- The Scale used for weighing has to be calibrated/certified in accordance with local/national Rules.
- There are two Methodologies for calculating the VGM:
 1. Weigh the packed/laden container
 2. Weigh all packages, packaging and dunnage material and add the tare weight of the container
- Carriers WILL NOT LOAD containers without having VGM.