

SOLAS CONTAINER WEIGHT REQUIREMENTS - FAQ



General Information

What is SOLAS?

SOLAS is the acronym for Safety of Life at Sea and is a convention under the International Maritime Organization (IMO) which governs many aspects to keep vessel operations safe. This latest amendment requires that carriers are provided an accurate weight for each container prior to loading to a vessel, and that the weight is determined by use of weighing equipment that meets national certification and calibration requirements. It will be a violation for the carrier to load a container to the vessel without a verified weight. The requirements become effective on July 1, 2016.

Who has the responsibility to implement and enforce these new requirements under SOLAS?

Each country is tasked with defining its own implementation and enforcement guidelines.

Which countries have this requirement?

There are 171 Member States and three Associate Members.

Why has there been a change to container weighing requirements under SOLAS?

The new requirements, formally an amendment to the IMO's existing Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) regulations, have been designed to reduce the number of accidents globally caused by containers whose weights have been mis-declared by shippers and their agents.

Who is responsible for the verified gross mass (VGM)?

The shipper on the bill of lading is responsible for the verified gross mass (VGM). The definition of "shipper" means the legal entity or person named on the bill of lading or sea waybill or equivalent multimodal transport document (e.g. "through" bill of lading) as shipper and/or (or in whose name or on whose behalf) a contract of carriage has been concluded with a shipping company.

What responsibilities do the carriers have?

The carriers have the responsibility to load only containers that has a verified gross mass (VGM) in place. They are in violation if they load containers without the verified weight.



Can shippers outsource the weighing of their cargo?

Yes, shippers may hire a third party to weigh their loose cargo (LCL) or their loaded container (FCL). However, the shipper (as shown on the bill of lading) has the ultimate responsibility to certify the verified gross mass (VGM).

How can a customer or shipper determine what is considered a “certified” scale?

This is determined at a country or state level. Not all countries have a program for certification of scales, but for those countries who do, the scales must meet their standards.

The importer may poll their vendors to ask the question, but there is no requirement for an importer to verify this information from the shipper at origin.

If the customer(s) asking the question has their own factories in other countries then this is something they may want to explore further with the factories.

Is there a list of entities who oversee the calibration of scales within each country? Is it the same party who will assign fines and penalties?

It is unknown whether or not each country has a government agency to oversee calibration of scales. Because not all countries have identified which agency will oversee SOLAS Container Weighing, it is therefore also unknown whether one agency, or multiple agencies will be involved within each country, and if that agency will determine who will oversee the calibration of scales.

The weight on the commercial document and BL looks different from the VGM weight, is that a problem?

The VGM is a separate document showing the weight of the cargo, the dunnage, and the tare weight of the container. It will be different from the commercial documents and the BL weight.

The terminal in my country is saying they will offer weighing services, do I need to still submit a VGM to the carrier if I have the containers weighed at the terminal?

This will ultimately depend on the local terminal and carrier procedures. The SOLAS regulation mentions that the shipper is responsible to submit the VGM to the carrier.

Expeditors Process Information

Will Expeditors have the capacity to weigh cargo at their facilities if requested by the shippers?

Our facilities will be equipped with calibrated and certified scales to accommodate for the need of weighing cargo starting July 1st. We are also working with service providers to weigh full containers. However, to limit disruption to the supply chain, shippers are encouraged to identify how they will have their cargo weighed.

How does Expeditors want to receive the VGM from the shippers?

We will accept the VGM in written from the shipper by either using our shipper’s VGM declaration form, or their own form. Shippers also have the ability to upload their declaration via our booking tools: exp.o Booking and OMB, and soon enter the VGM information in exp.o Booking. We can also work with customers who currently have EDI



connection with us to include VGM information in their submissions. Email is also an acceptable method if all the required information is mentioned with the signature (electronic signature in ALL CAPS).

What VGM data elements does Expeditors need from the shippers?

The information we need to receive from the shippers is the following:

- Expeditors Reference Number
- Container Number
- Method used to weigh the container (method 1 or method 2)
- Total VGM weight per container with unit of measure
- Weighing company name and contact details
- Date of weighing
- Signature (name in CAPS)
- Signatory company name (if different than shipper)
- Any additional information that is required by the local country implementation rules

How will Expeditors send the VGM to the carrier?

For carriers with EDI capability Expeditors will be prepared to submit the VGM data electronically. For all other carriers we will be prepared to submit hard copy VGM information.

What is the VGM cut off?

The VGM cut off will depend on the carriers and on the location. Many carriers will provide the VGM cut off with their booking confirmations.

If transmitted via EDI, how would the VGM transmission affect the Shipping Instructions transmission? And in case there is a shipping instruction amendment, does that affect the transmission?

As advised by the carriers, the preferred electronic transmission for the VGM is a separate message than the shipping instructions, therefore a shipping instructions amendment should not be impacted.

Will Expeditors let the shippers know that the VGM EDI transmission was successful?

We are working with our partner carriers to have an acknowledgment message of the receipt of the VGM through EDI, this will be passed along to our shippers/customers.

For more information, please contact your local Expeditors representative.