



CH-4010 Basel, EDA, SSA

To
Exporting companies
Shippers and freight forwarders acting as shippers or agents
Container haulage companies
Internal terminal operators
in Switzerland

Reference/file no.: 341.04-6
Our reference: ris
Basel, 9 June 2016

SOLAS Chapter VI - Verifying the gross weight of containers

Dear Sir or Madam

An important amendment to the UN SOLAS convention (International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea) of relevance to containerised cargo will enter into force on 1 July 2016.

From that date, the total gross weight (verified gross mass VGM) of a container must be determined before the container is loaded onto a vessel and be made available for drawing up the vessel stow plans. Under SOLAS, containers without verified VGM may no longer be loaded. The party designated as 'shipper' in the B/L is responsible for the VGM.

In accordance with International Maritime Organization recommendations, Switzerland recognises two methods to determine a container's VGM:

1. Method 1: Physically weighing the container
The packed and sealed container is weighed using weighing equipment permitted, calibrated and certified for Switzerland.
2. Method 2: Calculating the weight
The VGM is determined theoretically based on valid data on the cargo weight(s), packaging, stowage and securing material, as well as the container's tare weight. Those using the second method must meet at least one of the following criteria: ISO certification (all standards), AEO certification (Authorised Economic Operator) or IT-supported planning systems (MRP, ERP) in operation.

In determining the VGM of containers packed in Switzerland, deviations falling within tolerances allowed for the measuring equipment are permissible (accuracy standards). The regulations of the respective country apply in the loading port (tolerances).

According to the IMO, containers that were packed, sealed and shipped prior to 1 July 2016 may be transported without VGM information. The IMO recommends restraint in carrying out controls between July and September 2016 to allow for adaptation to the new procedures.

For further information, please contact your association or your logistics partner.

Swiss Maritime Navigation Office (SMNO)

Lukas Roth
Deputy Head SMNO

