

Important customer information - Verified Gross Mass

Dear business partners,

To ensure the safety of maritime transport, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), in the framework of the SOLAS Convention (chapter VI, part A rule 2), has decided that from **1 July 2016 no containers are allowed to be loaded on a ship whose gross mass has not been verified and confirmed.**

More information can be obtained from the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) published on 9 June 2014 in the MSC. 1 / Circ. 1475 guidelines for determining the certified gross mass for cargo containers. The document is available here:

<http://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Safety/>

The new SOLAS guidelines apply worldwide and it is imperative to bear them in mind. To avoid delays and extra costs in the transport process, we would like to give you some information on this topic below, and draw your attention to your "obligation to cooperate".

In this context, the term VGM (**V**erified **G**ross **M**ass) is used for the determination and confirmation of the gross mass. We will therefore use this acronym in the following.

How is VGM to be understood?

VGM means the total gross mass of a container and the (individual) weights of all pieces of shipping and cargo items, including pallets, storage material and other packaging and safety materials which have been loaded into a container.

What is the VGM needed for?

The VGM is required only for the creation of the vessels stowage plan and serves to ensure the safety of the vessel.

The VGM is independent of all other commercial documentation (export declarations, commercial invoices, certificates of origin, bills of lading etc.) as handled before,

i.e. that the gross mass is calculated without stowage, safety material and the tare weight of the empty container. **Nothing has been revised by these SOLAS amendments!**

How is the VGM determined?

Under the SOLAS Convention, there are **two methods** which are taken into account for determining the VGM. Selecting one of these methods is your responsibility.

In **Germany**, it is intended that for **method 1**, the loaded and sealed containers are precisely weighed on scales that are classified as accuracy class III (IV) of the 2014/31/EU directive.

During the weighing process, a weight note is regularly created which must be archived, to be presented when requested by the appropriate authorities.

If you do not have a weighing system available, and are not aware of any weighing systems in the vicinities of container loading, please feel free to contact us. We will then try to find a solution.

The application of **method 2** is an alternative for the weighing of a loaded container. With this calculation method, the individual weights of the cargo, stowage and lashing material as well as the weight (tare) of the container (which can be found on the outside of the container door), are combined.

When applying method 2 scales of accuracy class III of the directive 2014/31/EU for the determination of the individual masses must be used in Germany.

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Usage of method 2 to determine the gross mass must be certified and approved.

In Germany, companies that have either been granted AEO or ISO certification (ISO 9001, ISO 28001) can use method 2. The prerequisite here is that the certified calculation method in the corresponding standards and specifications is considered.

Companies that are non-approved as AEO nor have ISO certification, can however still make the determination of gross mass according to method 2.

The prerequisite here is, that the calculation of the individual weights, based on the calculation sheets developed by the competent BG Transport and Traffic authority in Germany, is appropriately documented and that the documentation is retained for at least three months after completion of the voyage.

The documentation can also be carried out using the current IT system if it can be assured that determining the gross mass is by means of the addition of verified information and that this can be traced. The documentation must be provided to the competent authority on request.

In Germany, this type of calculation is also considered as an authorized and certified method (method 2) within the meaning of the SOLAS regulation.

Apart from that, there is no additional approval procedure that exists in Germany.

How and when does the VGM need to be determined?

The VGM information ("verified gross mass", name and signature of the authorising person) must be determined early so that there is enough time for the shipping company to create a stowage plan.

What is deemed to be "timely", is stated by each shipping company individually and is to a great extent dependent on the size of the ship.

We have no possibility of influence here!

As a non-binding "rule of thumb" you can assume a period of at least 24 hours **prior to the ship's berthing**. We will inform you of your individual time frame, for your container placement.

We will need the above-mentioned VGM information from you in writing within the standard forwarding order or in a separate document. We will gladly provide you with a form on request.

The corresponding documentation can also be supplied electronically. In this case, the required signature can be accepted with a simple electronic signature (name of the authorized person in capital letters).

Containers on road vehicles

The determination of the VGM of a Container is also possible by weighing the container whilst it is on a road vehicle. The following alternatives are available.

The weighing of a container on a chassis (in accordance with section 11.1 SOLAS guidelines) is permitted in Germany, as is the so-called empty / full weighing.

For these two options, the authority in Germany has made available non-binding calculation templates to facilitate the correct determination of the VGM.

What happens if VGM data is not available or is incorrect?

The SOLAS amendments come into force worldwide on 1 July 2016.

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From this time forth no shipping or handling operation is permitted to load a container without the VGM on board a vessel.

If during a random check it is detected that the VGM statements are not true or inaccurate, the appropriate authorities have the option to declare a loading ban.

In addition to the delays, additional civil laws and/or regulatory consequences may arise.

Your “obligation to cooperate“

In this context, please note that we are working according to the ADSp – newest Edition.

As our customer you are obliged, in the case of maritime transport, to provide us with all required data under the law of the Sea Safety Regulations (e.g. SOLAS).

You assume sole responsibility for the completeness and correctness of all information that is required for the execution of the orders issued to us.

We will neither check nor complement this information.

Contact

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further questions.

www.alfons-koester.de

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