

Implementation guidelines for Solas Amendment on Container Weighing



Implementation Guidelines for the VGM Solas Amendment Provided by Carriers

VGM Reporting

- The Solas regulation requires effective 1st July 2016 the existence of a Verified Gross Mass (VGM) incl. container tare weight provided by the shipper as a pre-requisite for the Carrier and the TO to load the cargo on board of the vessel.
- If a VGM exists, the cargo will be loaded.
- It remains the legal responsibility of the shipper to provide the VGM regardless whoever reports in fact the VGM to the Carrier and/or to the Terminal Operator.



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No re- weighing

- If a VGM exists, the cargo will be loaded.
- Neither shipping lines nor container terminals will re-verify a container with an already verified weight (VGM).
- Carriers ask TOs explicitly to ensure that such re-verification does not take place – subject to national legislation.



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Reporting in case of weight discrepancies

- If TOs under own – already currently existing and used – safety regulations notice significant discrepancies between the VGM (declared by the Shipper) and the scaled real weight, the TO may – in such exceptional case – re-weigh the container.
- If the discrepancy between the VGM declared by the shipper and the re-verified VGM of the TO exceeds 1 ton (1000 kg), the revised VGM and the VGM flag (but no authorized person) are to be reported to the Carrier and to the Shipper.
- If the discrepancy is less than 1 ton, the original VGM is kept unchanged.



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Placement of VGM order

- Shippers can provide the VGM by own means, can book it with a carrier, can nominate a 3rd party, for example a weighing station, or can even nominate the TO to provide the VGM.
- The shipper may outsource the verification of weight to service providers, such as to the carrier, to the TO, to weighing stations, etc.
- Carriers accept VGM from weighing stations or any other service provider authorized by the Shipper as long as that 3rd party provides the name of the shipper on whose behalf they are acting. However, the shipper remains in charge to report the weight to the carrier.
- An authorization in writing has to be given by the shipper to the authorized service provider, but not necessarily by individual container. Carriers do not verify the authorization.



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Gate procedures

- Carriers will not restrict shippers to deliver containers without VGM to the TO gate, to be discharged from barge, feeder vessel or main liner system (subject to national legislation and port rules).
- However, packed containers are only permitted to be loaded, if they are flagged with a VGM flag on the load list. Empty containers will be loaded without VGM.
- Cut- offs under carrier responsibility apply.



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Gate procedures

- Carriers strongly recommend to shippers and other supply chain partners to provide the VGM in an early stage of the supply chain, for example before the container leaves the premises of the customer, before the unit is loaded on rail or on a barge.
- Weighing at the gate of the container terminal or inside a container terminal is not recommended, since it creates delays to the VGM data flow and increases the risk of errors and missed loadings.



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Transshipment units and units discharged from feeder carriers

- The Solas regulation stipulates the existence of a VGM provided by the shipper in order to have the cargo loaded on board of the first vessel in the supply chain under Solas jurisdiction (more than 500 gross tonnage).
- The existence of the VGM is not to be checked by the TO at the incoming vessel / carrier. VGM data for packed containers to be discharged is received by the TO through the Baplie file submitted by the vessel operator.
- Packed transshipment containers are only permitted to be loaded on the connecting vessel, if they are flagged with a VGM on the load list (same as local export containers).



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VSA matters

- Each VSA partner will be in charge of his own load list to be sent to the terminal operator with VGM information for packed containers.
- VSA partners (and vessel operators) are not allowed to add packed containers without valid VGM to its final load list. Empty units may be load listed without VGM. Initial load list(s) may be provided containing individual packed units where the VGM is not yet available.
- If VSA partners send a load list including some individual packed containers without VGM to the vessel operator, it is recommended that the VSA partner adds information about the missing VGM weights, for example in an e-mail to the vessel operator. The vessel operator may approve or decline.



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VSA matters

- The vessel operator will (usually) plan the vessel in such way assuming that the VSA partner supplies the VGM information in time. It is the obligation of the VSA partner to provide the updated, final load list asap to the vessel operator. Further deadlines and working procedures to be agreed on a operational level amongst VSA partners.
- The vessel operator will not re-verify the load lists of the VSA partners and will not double-check VGM compliance.
- The VSA partners remain fully responsible for Solas- VGM compliance for all units loadlisted.



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VGM Data flow

- Shippers have four options how to submit the VGM: (1) via shipping portals (Intra, GT Nexus, etc.), (2) via VERMAS, (3) via booking request or (4) via shipping instruction.
- For early VGM information COPARN may be used as optional additional VGM transmission from Carrier to the TO. Also VERMAS may be used.
- Carriers usually report the VGM after cargo cut off via COPRAR LOAD (load list) to the TO and to the Master of the vessel (other operational models may apply)
- The TO must capture the VGM weight in its TOS and will use the VGM weight as unique weight for all operational purposes, such as for example for stow planning.



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VGM Data flow

- In case that carriers (on behalf of shippers) place orders for extra VGM service to TOs, such service order may be reported to the TO via COPARN.
- The TO will capture the VGM weight in its TOS and will use the VGM weight as unique weight for all operational purposes, such as for example for stow planning.



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VGM Data flow for stow planning

- The BAPLIE LOAD file of the vessel operator includes containers operated by the vessel operator and by its partner lines. It will include the VGM for the packed containers operated by the vessel operator. For MOVINS, the VGM flag/qualifier is not included.
- If COPRAR LOAD files are exchanged amongst individual Carriers and if such exchange is customary in a given country, the BAPLIE LOAD file will include the VGM for the packed containers operated by the vessel operator and the VGM for those partner lines providing VGM information via COPRAR LOAD to the vessel operator.



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VGM Data flow for stow planning

- The TO will 'overwrite' non- VGM weights provided by the BAPLIE LOAD file, for example for partner units, with correct VGM weights out of its TOS system (received via COPRAR load lists from the individual partner lines) and will return a BAPLIE file with correct VGM information.
- The Pre- Departure Condition which the TO usually sends in the form of a BAPLIE file to the vessel operator and/or to the Master of the vessel must include the VGM flag which has been processed in the TOS of the TO and used for stow planning by the TO beforehand. The pre-departure condition file (which is send to the Master/Vessel stowage teams before actual arrival) might still have a few none-VGM units included, but a clean pre-departure file must be given to the Master before actual loading commences.



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Data flow from the TO to Carriers

- In case that the TO receive an order for a VGM service by the Carrier or by the shipper or in case the TO re-weighed the container (as there are clear indications for a false weight declaration), a VGM (VGM weight and VGM flag, but no authorized person) is to be reported via EDI, for example via CODECO or VERMAS to the Carrier and to the Shipper.
- All other required EDI messages have been amended to be fit for VGM. Final message implementation guides are provided on www.smdg.com



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Tolerances

- Shippers have to provide an accurate weight without any tolerance (subject to national legislation).
- The weight will not be re-verified by carriers or TOs.
- Authorities will define inspection and enforcement schemes which may define tolerance threshold for fines and penalties.
- Scale calibration accuracy factors are a matter of national legislation and would typically be in a range of 2% to 3%. This is not to be mixed up with the term 'tolerance'.
- The tare weight of containers to be used for method 2 is the tare weight labeled on the respective container.

