

SOLAS

(or verified gross mass of containers)

What is it?

What you need to know before 1 July 2016

By Magellan Logistics, February 2016



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WHAT WILL CHANGE AS OF JULY 1ST 2016?

- The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has adopted amendments to the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention that requires a packed container's gross mass to be verified prior to stowage aboard a ship.
- From July 1st 2016 this regulation, effective as global law, prohibits loading of a packed container in absence of the verified gross mass (VGM) declaration.
- This applies to all packed containers which are to be loaded onto a vessel under the SOLAS convention in international maritime traffic.
- This will be administered as law by the Government of the country of origin.



But...why????



The consequences of incorrectly declared weights are significant.



WHAT DO SHIPPERS NEED TO DO?

- The VGM details must be provided to the carrier sufficiently in advance of vessel loading, and prior to any containers being received for shipment.
- The responsibility for obtaining and providing the verified gross mass lies solely with the party who is declared as the Shipper on the Bill of Lading.
- The VGM will need to be declared to the organising Freight Forwarder and/or the Shipping Line for each container shipped as an FCL. For cargo shipped as LCL, the shipment gross weight will need to be declared to the Freight Forwarder.

TWO WAYS TO DETERMINE THE VGM?

The **SOLAS** regulations prescribes only two methods by which the shipper may obtain the verified gross mass of a packed container.

Method 1



The shipper may weigh the packed and sealed container using calibrated and certified equipment.

The weighing method needs to be done using certified weighing equipment.

Method 2



The shipper may add the weight of each package in the container, the packing and securing material and the tare weight of the utilized container.

The method itself needs to be certified and approved by a national regulatory body that is regulated in law by the country of the shipment origin.

ESTIMATIONS ARE NOT PERMITTED

Under either method, the weighing equipment used must meet the Government's national certification and calibration requirements.

The IMO Guidelines also state that Method 2 would be:

inappropriate and impractical for certain types of cargo items (eg, scrap metal, unbagged grain and other bulk cargo etc)

that

do not easily lend themselves to individual weighing of the items to be packed in the container.

Should Method 1 be chosen, adequate time will need to be allowed for the full container weighing to be done, the weight declaration made, submitted and accepted, prior to the container being delivered to the wharf terminal.





WHAT DO IMPORTERS NEED TO DO?

- Raise the issue with suppliers and be confident that your suppliers are familiar with the new responsibilities on them as the Shipper of goods.
- Understand the Supplier's supply points and if products come from external vendors, get comfort that the external vendors are familiar with their responsibilities.
- Ensure your suppliers are conforming with either methods 1 or 2 in the supply of a verified gross mass declaration, compliant to the applicable regulations in their country.
- Whilst the compliance is a Shipper issue, it becomes an Importer's issue if any Shippers fail to comply on or after 1st July 2016 – non-compliance to local regulations will most probably cause shipping lines to refuse receipt of containers for shipment.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A VGM IS NOT SUBMITTED IN A TIMELY MANNER?

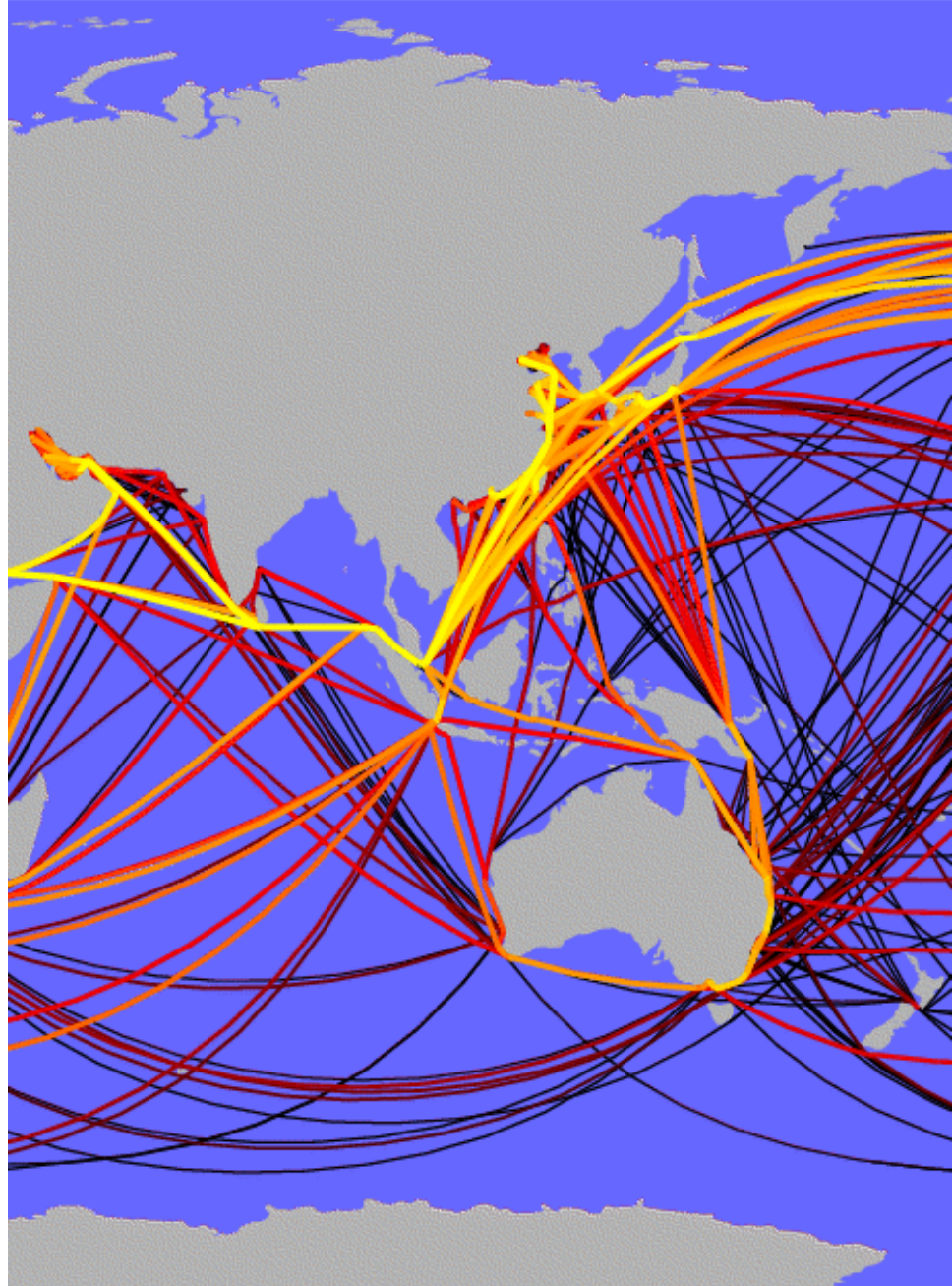


A packed container, for which the verified gross mass has not been obtained will not be loaded on the vessel.

Loading of a packed container without VGM on to a vessel is an offence against an existing SOLAS regulation.

WHICH COUNTRIES ARE MEMBERS OF THE IMO, AND AS SUCH, MUST APPLY THE SOLAS CONVENTION IN LAW?

- As of 2015, there were 171 member states of the IMO, which includes 170 of the United Nations members and the Cook Islands.
- Australia has been a member of IMO since 1952. The administration of SOLAS in Australia is the responsibility of the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, an agency of the Australian Government.
- Most of the UN member states that are not members of IMO are landlocked countries.



ALSO ...

WHO IS THE IMO?

- The **International Maritime Organization (IMO)**, known as the **Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO)** until 1982, is a specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for regulating shipping.
- The IMO was established in Geneva in 1948.



INTERPRETING SOLAS

- The administration of the full requirements of the SOLAS Convention is embodied in the laws of the member countries.
- The application of regulations in the administration of the requirements of SOLAS will most probably vary from country to country.
- There may be different interpretations of the regulations in many member countries.

ARE YOUR SHIPPERS READY?

For more information get in touch with Magellan Logistics on 1300 651 888 or visit our [website](#).

<http://www.magellanlogistics.com.au/global-container-weight-verification-legislation-from-july-2016/>

Sources and more information:

[Safety4Sea](#)

[World Shipping](#)

[Global Shippers Forum](#)

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