

SEAFREIGHT SUB-COMMITTEE

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Verification of Gross Mass of Container

The Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) of International Maritime Organization (IMO) approved changes to the SOLAS Convention (International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea) regarding a mandatory container weight verification requirement on shippers, which will become legally effective on 01 July 2016. Marine Department (MD) is the authority regulates the container mass verification within the territory of Hong Kong.

Under the new requirement, shipper is responsible to obtain and record the verified gross mass (VGM) of the packed container in documentary format. In case any container comprises more than one shipper's cargo, the entity consolidates, seals and delivers the container to the carrier (i.e. forwarders) shall be responsible for the verification of container mass, including pallets, dunnage and other securing material to be packed in the container. The Master of carrier or his representative and the terminal's representative shall be provided with the container gross mass figure when the container was delivered to the terminal gate.



Source: World Maritime News



The screenshot shows the IMO website's 'Knowledge Centre' page for 'Verification of the gross mass of a packed container'. It includes an introduction explaining the purpose of the requirement, the SOLAS amendments adopted in 2011, and a list of related documents such as the MSC.1/Circ.1472 and MSC.1/Circ.1473.

The industry may opt for either one of the method below for mass verification of a packed container:

- Method 1:** weighing the packed container using the authorized weighing scales companies for weighing;
- Method 2:** weighing all packages and cargo items, including pallets, dunnage and other securing material to be packed in the container and adding the tare mass of the container to the sum of the single mass using a certified method 2 approved by the Marine Department in which packing of the container was completed. Shipper adopting Method 2 shall provide the information (like BR, organization chart, procedure of container mass verification, safety management policy, training) during their applications of registration to MD.

Further to our update in the Seafreight Sub-committee Report (2014-2015), MD invited industry stakeholders including HAFFA for an informal consultation on 23 October 2015 to discuss how to implement the legal requirement of container weighing under SOLAS. After reviewing the draft implementation guidelines prepared by MD, HAFFA brought out many operational concerns and made suggestions to address the problems. Subsequently, we submitted a long question list to MD and made several rounds of views exchange with a hope that MD could take into consideration our comments before finalizing the guidelines. Meanwhile, in response to MD's request, with the help of Seafreight Sub-committee Members, HAFFA provided MD with the contact of local weighing companies and it was noted that the Department is accepting and assessing the applications submitted by those weighing companies.

In order for the industry to better understand the implementation details of the new requirement, MD will organize briefing sessions (first one scheduled on 27 April 2016 at Lecture Hall, Sheung Wan Civic Centre). Given the new requirement will have significant impact on forwarders' operations, Members are highly encouraged to join one of the briefing sessions. Besides, MD advised that they accept it as one way of recognized training for the application of Method 2.

MD has published a VGM guideline, application form of method 2, guidance on how the gross mass of a packed container can be obtained by using method 2, and relevant information in its website (http://www.mardep.gov.hk/en/pub_services/ocean/miss_vgm.html) on 06 April 2016, Members are recommended to spend sometimes to read through the guideline before attending the briefing session and visit the website from time to time as the information such as FAQ will be updated frequently.

Date: 19 April 2016

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