

Important update regarding SOLAS regulations - Verified Gross Mass (VGM)

As of July 1st, the weight of all containers must be verified before loading on board the maritime vessel. Containers will be accepted on terminals in Antwerp without a confirmed Verified Gross Mass (VGM) but it will be illegal for shipping lines to load them on board until the VGM is communicated.

Below you will find the method of working as currently foreseen. Please be aware of the fact that the country specific regulations have not been finalized yet. Amendments can still be made, although the below is very close to the final set up.

Main principles

- 1) After loading the shipper needs to provide the Verified Gross Mass (VGM) by using one of the two official methods.
- 2) The VGM needs to be reported to the carrier before the containers will be loaded on board of the vessel. The shipper must provide this information in due time to the forwarder. The forwarder will then pass the VGM on to the carrier. The exact time frame for providing this information will depend on the carrier's preferences and will be confirmed in due time.
- 3) Without the VGM the container will not be loaded. If any charges occur because of this they will always be for the shipper's account as it is their responsibility to provide this information.
- 4) The VGM needs to be provided for each container (no total weight counts per Bill of Lading or booking are accepted).
- 5) In Belgium, there will be a 5% margin of error related to legal enforcements and checks.

Determining the weight

The weighing equipment used for both method 1 and 2 must meet the applicable accuracy standards and requirements of the state in which the equipment is being used.

Method 1: After loading and sealing a container, the shipper may weigh or arrange a third party to weigh the packed container. This needs to be done on a certified and calibrated platform scale/weigh bridge. In case the shipper arranges the weighing, they must also provide a certificate (as proof of weighing).

Method 2: The shipper or a third party (as arranged by the shipper) may weigh all packages and cargo items, including the mass of pallets, dunnage, and other packing materials securing the cargo to be packed in the container, and add the tare mass of the container to the sum of the single masses of the container's contents.

This is only possible in the following cases:

- The weighing process has been certified and approved by the competent authority of the state in which the packing of the container was completed. This means the weighing process

has been documented, checked by and filed with the FOD Mobiliteit in Belgium.

The contact address to request this is: VGM@mobiliteit.fgov.be

- The Belgian government will trust shippers with a valid ISO or AEO certificate, provided the weighing process is part of the certificate. This means the ISO or AEO certification needs to be upgraded in order to qualify.

Once the weighing process has been filed or when your ISO or AEO certificate has been upgraded, you will be listed in a general database and are then allowed to provide the VGM yourselves.

If you cannot obtain this, Method 1 may be used by all shippers. If you cannot arrange this yourself, please feel free to contact us regarding possibilities and involved costs.

Confirming the VGM to your forwarder

In order to obtain the VGM in a structured way, we request all shippers provide us with a document prepared as follows:

- Full company details (on your letterhead)
- Container number and seal number
- VGM weight in kgs
- Date of declaration
- Name of authorized person
- Signature of authorized person
- Identification and reference of ISO / AEO or Belgium database (if available)

With the starting day less than a month and a half away, we strongly urge you to check this out in detail and send us your questions and remarks as soon as possible. This should help to make a smooth transition once the new rules are enforced.