

# Verified Gross Mass (VGM) – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

## 1. What is the SOLAS container weight verification requirement?

Misdeclaration of the gross mass of a packed container can compromise the safety of the ship, seafarers, and shore-side workers, by leading to incorrect vessel stowage decisions and potentially collapsed container stacks or loss of containers overboard. In November 2014, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) amended the Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS) to require that all packed containers come with a verified weight before they are loaded onto ships for export.

[IMO is a United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships.]

## 2. When did it come into effect?

This requirement became legally effective on 1 July 2016. After that date, it would be a violation of SOLAS to load a packed container onto a vessel if the vessel operator and marine terminal operator do not have a verified container weight.

## 3. Who must declare the verified gross mass (VGM) of the container?

The shipper is responsible for the verification of the packed container's weight.

## 4. How is the verified gross mass of the packed container obtained?

The SOLAS regulations prescribe two methods to verify the container weight once container packing has taken place.

**Method 1** Weighing the container after it has been packed, or

**Method 2** Weighing all the cargo and contents of the container and adding those weights to the container's tare weight as indicated on the door of the container.

Estimating weight is not permitted.

## 5. When to submit the VGM?

VGM should be received by Swire Shipping prior to the cargo gate cut-off before loading the vessel. However, the cut-offs and requirements for VGM submission may vary depending on the requirements of local ports and terminals. Swire Shipping will adhere to these specific local variations.

## **6. What happens if the VGM is not submitted?**

Swire Shipping enforces a "No VGM, No Load" policy. Swire Shipping and its agents/contractors will comply strictly with the SOLAS VGM rules and any local government or port authority legislation relating to compliance with the SOLAS VGM rules.

Laden containers tendered for shipment from 1 July 2016 onwards without a declared VGM will not be loaded. Depending on local enforcement and implementation of the VGM rules, ports/terminals may also apply a NO VGM, NO GATE-IN policy.

## **7. How accurate does the VGM need to be? Is there a percentage +/-?**

In the absence of local/national regulation stipulating acceptable variances to the VGM declared by the shipper, Swire Shipping will apply an acceptable variance standard of +/- 5% to the declared VGM.

Please note a container with a total gross mass exceeding its maximum permitted gross mass will not be loaded.

## **8. Where to get further information?**

Guidelines/ information on the container weight verification requirement can be found at:

<https://www.worldshipping.org/statements/px644k5wjwdm1ndpcpgqbqvazz1dej>