

# Important customer information - Verified Gross Mass

Dear business partners,

to ensure the safety of maritime transport, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), in the framework of the SOLAS Convention (chapter VI, part A rule 2), has decided that from **1 July 2016 no containers are allowed to be loaded on a ship whose gross mass has not been verified and confirmed.**

More information can be obtained from the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) published on 9 June 2014 in the MSC. 1 / Circ. 1475 guidelines for determining the certified gross mass for cargo containers. The document is available here:

<http://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Safety/Cargoes/Containers/Documents/MSC.1%20Circ.1475.pdf>

**The new SOLAS guidelines apply worldwide and it is imperative to bear them in mind.** To avoid delays and extra costs in the transport process, we want to give you some information on this topic below, and draw your attention to your "obligation to cooperate".

In this context, the term VGM (**V**erified **G**ross **M**ass) is used for the determination and confirmation of the gross mass. We will therefore use this acronym in the following.

## *How is VGM to be understood?*

VGM means the total gross mass of a container and the (individual) weights of all pieces of shipping and cargo items, including pallets, storage material and other packaging and safety materials which have been loaded into a container.

## *For what is the VGM needed for?*

The VGM to the shipping company is required only for the creation of the vessels stowage plan and serves for ensuring the safety of the vessel.

It remains independent of all commercial documentation (export declarations, commercial invoices, certificates of origin, bills of lading etc.) from previous practices, i.e. that the gross mass is calculated without

stow- and safety material and the tare weight of the empty container. **Nothing is changed here by the SOLAS amendments!**

## *How is the VGM determined?*

Under the SOLAS Convention, there are **two methods** which are taken into account for determining the VGM. Selecting one of these methods is your responsibility.

In **Germany**, it is intended that for **method 1**, the loaded and sealed containers are precisely weighed on scales that are classed with accuracy class IIII (IV) of 2014/31/EU directive.

During the weighing process, a weight note is regularly created that you must archive and be able to present when requested by the appropriate authority.

If you do not have a weighing system available to you and are not aware of any weighing systems around the area where your containers are loaded, please feel free to contact us. We will then try to find a solution together with you.

The application of **method 2** is an alternative for the weighing of a loaded container. In this calculation method, the individual weights of the cargo, stowage and lashing material as well as the weight (tare) of the container (which can be found on the outside of the container door), are all added up together.

In the application of method 2, the balances of accuracy class III of the directive 2014/31/EU for the determination of the individual masses in Germany, are to be applied.

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The use of method 2 to determine the gross mass must be certified and approved.

In Germany, companies that have either been granted AEO or ISO certification (ISO 9001, ISO 28001) can use method 2. The prerequisite here is that the certified calculation method in the corresponding standards and specifications is considered.

Companies that are non-approved as AEO nor have ISO certification, can however still make the determination of gross mass according to method 2.

The prerequisite here is, that the calculation of the individual weights, based on the calculation sheets developed by the competent BG Transport and Traffic authority in Germany, is appropriately documented and that the documentation is retained for at least three months after the end of the voyage.

The documentation can also be carried out using the current IT system if it can be assured that determining the gross mass is by means of the addition of verified information and that this can be traced. The documentation must be provided to the competent authority on request.

In Germany, this type of calculation is also considered as an authorised and certified method (method 2) within the meaning of the SOLAS regulation.

**Apart from that, there is no additional approval procedure that exists in Germany.**

### ***How and when does the VGM need to be determined?***

The VGM information ("verified gross mass", name and signature of the authorising person) must be determined early enough so that there is enough time for the shipping company being employed for the sea transport, to create a stowage plan.

What is deemed to be "timely", is set by each shipping company individually and is to a great extent dependent on the size of the ship.

### **We have no possibility of influence here!**

As non-binding "rule of thumb" you can assume a period of at least 24 hours **before the ship berthing**. We will inform you of the exact date for your individual order in the context of the appointment for the provision of the container.

We will need the above-mentioned VGM information from you in writing within the standard forwarding order or in a separate document. We will gladly provide you with a form on request.

The corresponding documentation can also be supplied electronically. In this case, the required signature can be accepted with a simple electronic signature (name of the authorised person in capital letters).

### ***Containers on road vehicles***

The determination of the VGM of a container is also possible by weighing the container whilst it is on a road vehicle. The following alternatives are available.

The weighing of a container on a chassis (in accordance with section 11.1 SOLAS guidelines) is also permitted in Germany, as is a so-called empty / full weighing also.

For these two possibilities, the authority in Germany has made available non-binding calculation templates to facilitate the correct determination of the VGM.

### ***What happens if VGM data is not available or is incorrect?***

The SOLAS amendments come into force worldwide on 1 July 2016. At that time, basically, no shipping or handling operation is to load a container without the VGM on board a vessel.

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If during a random check it is detected that the VGM statements are not true and accurate, then the competent authority has the ability to pronounce a loading ban.

In addition to the delays, additional civil laws and/or regulatory consequences may arise.

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### **Contact**

Please do not hesitate to contact us, should you have any questions.

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