



CIRCULAR

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**Amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS)
Chapter VI, Regulation 2**

Amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Chapter VI, Part A, Regulation 2 entering into force on 01.06.2016 require that the shipper of a container shall ensure that the verified gross mass is stated in the shipping document and submitted to the master or his representative and to the terminal representative sufficiently in advance (see Annex 1).

The requirement does not apply to containers carried on a chassis or a trailer when such containers are driven on or off a ro-ro ship engaged in short international voyages as defined in SOLAS Regulation III/3.

SOLAS does not mandate any particular form of communication between the parties exchanging the verified gross mass (VGM) information.

The amendments provide that there are two methods to determine the VGM, either by:

1. weighing the packed container; or
2. weighing all packages and cargo items, including the mass of 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 masses.

The document shall be signed by a person duly authorized by the shipper. The information and signature may be transmitted electronically.

Unless the master or his representative and the terminal representative have obtained in advance the certified shipping document clearly declaring the VGM of the packed container, it shall not be loaded on to the ship.

The use of the calibrated and certified equipment for determining the gross mass of the packed container in Estonia must comply with the provisions and accuracy requirements of the national measurement standards based on the Estonian Metrology Act.

Transit containers arriving to Estonia that are shipped to their final port of discharge are required to have a shipping document stating the VGM certified by the shipper. For the verification of the gross mass the shipper uses the calibrated and certified equipment in compliance with applicable national accuracy standards.

The Maritime Safety Committee at its ninety-sixth session adopted MSC Circular MSC.1/Circ.1548. The Committee agreed that Administrations and Port State Control Authorities should adopt a practical and pragmatic approach to the SOLAS amendments concerning VGM, permitting packed containers that are loaded on a ship before 1 July 2016 and are transhipped on or after 1 July 2016 to be shipped to their final port of discharge without the VGM specified in SOLAS regulations VI/2.4 to VI/2.6.

Sincerely

Marek Rauk
Deputy Director General,
Head of Maritime Safety Division

Annex1: SOLAS CHAPTER VI, Regulation2, Paragraphs 4-6.pdf

**SOLAS CHAPTER VI
CARRIAGE OF CARGOES AND OIL FUELS**

General Provisions

Regulation 2 – Cargo information

The following new paragraphs 4 to 6 are added after existing paragraph 3:

"4 In the case of cargo carried in a container*, except for containers carried on a chassis or a trailer when such containers are driven on or off a ro-ro ship engaged in short international voyages as defined in regulation III/3, the gross mass according to paragraph 2.1 of this regulation shall be verified by the shipper, either by:

1. weighing the packed container using calibrated and certified equipment; or
2. weighing all packages and cargo items, including the mass of 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 masses, using a certified method approved by the competent authority of the State in which packing of the container was completed.

5 The shipper of a container shall ensure the verified gross mass** is stated in the shipping document. The shipping document shall be:

1. signed by a person duly authorized by the shipper;
2. submitted to the master or his representative and to the terminal representative sufficiently in advance, as required by the master or his representative, to be used in the preparation of the ship stowage plan***.

6 If the shipping document, with regard to a packed container, does not provide the verified gross mass and the master or his representative and the terminal representative have not obtained the verified gross mass of the packed container, it shall not be loaded on to the ship."

* The term "container" should be considered as having the same meaning as defined and applied in the International Convention for Safe Containers (CSC), 1972, as amended, taking into account the *Guidelines for the approval of offshore containers handled in open seas* (MSC/Circ.860) and the *Revised Recommendations on harmonized interpretation and implementation of the International Convention for Safe Containers, 1972, as amended* (CSC.1/Circ.138/Rev.1).

** Refer to the *Guidelines regarding the verified gross mass of a container carrying cargo* (MSC.1/Circ.1475).

*** This document may be presented by means of EDP or EDI transmission techniques. The signature may be an electronic signature or may be replaced by the name, in capitals, of the person authorized to sign."