



# DHL GLOBAL FORWARDING SOLAS (SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA)

VERIFIED GROSS MASS (VGM) SHIPPER GUIDE

DHL Global Forwarding – Excellence. Simply delivered.



# WHAT IS SOLAS?



In November 2014, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), a United Nations Agency, adopted mandatory amendments to chapter VI of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) – cargo information.

**The new requirement states that it is the responsibility of the shipper on record to provide the container's Verified Gross Mass (VGM) to the ocean carriers.**

The SOLAS amendments are effective from 1st July, 2016 onwards for packed containers received for transportation (gate-in or off-rail).

The IMO has asked **the local authorities for a 3 month grace period** to ensure there's no ambiguity on transshipments and that all software packages and templates are finalized.

## WHAT IS THE REASON FOR SOLAS?

The amendment has been implemented because there are currently no rules or processes in place to ensure that the weight provided for loading is accurate. This is leading to huge risks for the workforce, vessels, terminals and equipment.

SOLAS is part of the IMO (International Maritime Organization), who created the VGM requirement to protect the carrier's people and assets, the terminal and cargo.

## WHO IS AFFECTED BY SOLAS?

The SOLAS convention is a global law. It is mandatory for all states/countries which are members of the IMO to adopt the VGM rules, either in their original form or with additional requirements in accordance with local/national laws or rules.

Enforcement and regulation of the VGM rules remains with the local state/government authorities responsible for maritime affairs, such as the Coast Guard in the USA and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency in the UK.

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SOLAS?

The shipper (the party named as shipper in the Bill of Lading or Sea Waybill) is responsible for providing the VGM to the carrier within reasonable time of the vessel loading and/or full gate at the sea port terminal. A 3rd Party can be authorized by the shipper to provide the VGM on their behalf.

Shipping lines and DGF are not responsible for verifying this information. The VGM will not show on the Bill of Lading, it is declared separately to the gross cargo weight entered in the Bill of Lading.



# YOUR QUICK GUIDE TO SOLAS AMENDMENTS

- ✓ The shipper named on the Ocean Bill of Lading is responsible for VGM transmission to the carrier
- ✓ 3rd Party authorization is possible
- ✓ VGM consists of the cargo weight, which includes packaging, dunnage materials and the tare weight of the container
- ✓ DGF offers various processes for VGM submission
- ✗ **No verified weight means no loading**

For more information about the basic principles of the SOLAS requirement, visit [World Shipping Council](#).



## SOLAS APPLIES TO

- Packed containers which are loaded onto any freight ship in international maritime traffic.
- Packed containers on a chassis or trailer to be driven on a Ro-Ro ship if not engaged in short international carriage.
- All export containers.
- Container types: tank containers, flat-racks, container platforms and bulk containers.

## SOLAS DOES NOT APPLY TO

- A packed container on a chassis or trailer to be driven on a Ro-Ro ship on short international voyages.
- Cargo items tendered by a shipper to the master for packing into a container already on board the ship.
- Empty containers.
- 'Offshore containers' handled in open seas.
- Any type of vehicle.

# LETTER OF INDEMNIFICATION (LOI)

- The LOI confirms the shippers liability to submit the correct VGM information to DGF
- The LOI is mandatory for all FCL shipments. It is used when either DGF are relying on the VGM provided by the Customer or the Customer asks us to weigh the container
- Buyers consolidations – when DGF is tasked with building containers and obtaining VGM, DGF will require LOI from the buyer
- Any authorized shipper's representative can sign the LOI. It can be a corporate person covering a larger area/region.

## HOW DO THE NEW REGULATIONS BENEFIT YOU?

All parties across the supply chain will benefit from the new rules:

- **Shippers:** Reduced risk of damage to cargo
- **Carriers:** Improved stowage increases safety for the crew and vessel. Reduced re-stows saves time and last minute cancellations are avoided
- **Terminals:** Better pre-stows are enabled and dispatch is improved and accelerated, minimizing last minute changes

In general, our industry will face less delays and a safer working environment. This regulation will significantly increase safety and transport quality for everyone involved in the supply chain.



# HOW IS THE VGM DETERMINED?

The SOLAS regulation recommends two methods for the shipper to obtain a packed container's VGM.

**Method 1:** The shipper can weigh the packed and sealed container using calibrated and certified equipment.

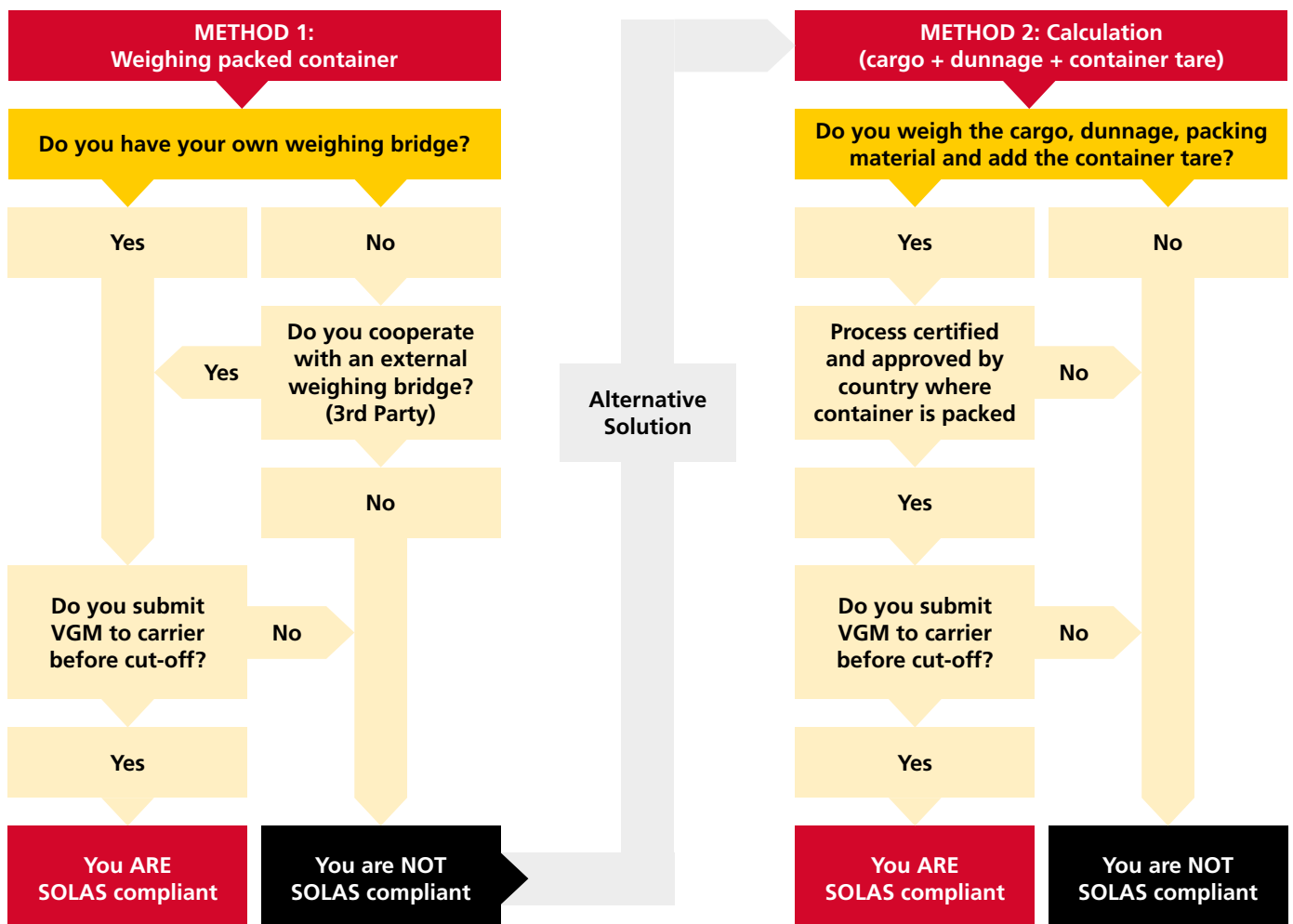
**Method 2:** The shipper can add the weight of each package in the container, the packing and securing material and the tare weight of the utilized container. The method itself needs to be certified and approved by a national regulatory body. An estimation of the weight is not permitted.

We will ensure the weight submitted to DGF is properly processed along the transport chain.

**Important!** Packages that clearly and permanently display the accurate mass do not need to be weighed again once they are packed into the container. However, shippers may want to review their packaging and database records to ensure the most accurate weight is stored in their system.

## VGM CALCULATING METHODS

There are two ways of defining the VGM: by weighing your packed container or by calculation.



# VGM CALCULATING METHODS

## METHOD 1

Once a container is packed and sealed, the shipper must weigh – or arrange that a 3rd Party weighs – the packed container, within accuracy standards.

If the VGM of a packed container is obtained by weighing the container while it is on a road vehicle (e.g. chassis or trailer), subtract the tare mass of the road vehicle (including fuel etc.) to obtain the VGM of the packed container.

The container can be weighed via a weighing bridge (it must be calibrated and certified) or at a shipper or 3rd Party's premises at a cost. DGF will be happy to assist Customers in organizing this.

## METHOD 2

The shipper (or a 3rd Party arranged by the shipper) must weigh all the packages and cargo items (including the mass of pallets, dunnage and other packing and securing material in the container) and add the tare mass of the container to the sum of the single masses, using a certified and approved method (as required by the state or country where the container is packed).

Only the method used for weighing the container's contents in method 2 is subject to certification and approval, as determined by the competent authority of the state or country in which the container was packed and sealed. The scale used for weighing must be calibrated/certified in accordance with local/national rules.

# SOLAS IMPLICATIONS

- From July 2016, the shipper must provide the VGM weight of every container to the carrier, before the cut-off date provided by DGF/carrier
- It will be the shipper's responsibility to ensure that the accurate weight (and not an estimate) is provided
- The 'shipper' refers to the party identified on the carrier's or Danmar Lines Bill of Lading

**If no VGM weight is provided, the shipping line will not load the container onto the vessel and it may be refused at the terminal gate.**

### NO VGM, NO LOAD:

Only shipper-declared containers with VGM will be loaded onto a vessel



### NO VGM, NO GATE IN:

Certain terminals adopt a more stringent policy to reject containers without VGM at gate-in





# FURTHER INFORMATION

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BOOKED WEIGHT, BILL OF LADING WEIGHT AND THE VGM

- **Booked weight** is the weight estimated at the time of booking
- **Bill of Lading weight** is the correct weight of the cargo (excluding dunnage, securing materials and the tare weight of the container)
- **VGM** is the weight, including the cargo, dunnage, other packing and securing materials and tare weight of the container

## WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF LCL SHIPMENTS

1. Physically weighing each individual LCL shipment is not a time-efficient method, so DGF will instruct their offices to weigh each consolidation container after loading. This weight will be considered as VGM and transmitted to the carrier.
2. **DGF must receive the ACTUAL weight per LCL shipment from the Customer who made the booking before loading.** DGF then compares the sum of all individual weights/shipment with the total actual VGM of the consolidation container after loading. The carrier or NVOCC is not a 'verifier' of the weight provided by the shipper.
3. Each DGF office will advance the CFS cut-off dates so reloading is still possible if overweight cargo is found at the terminal.

## HOW CAN YOU SEND US VGM INFORMATION?

VGM reporting is the sole responsibility of the shipper (who may use a 3rd Party to pack the container). The local VGM cut-off may vary with location.

## PREFERRED METHODS OF SUBMISSION

- Existing EDI connections (electronic shipping instructions)
- DHL public website via Template
- Via email or Fax via Template
- Various portals such as INTTRA, GT NEXUS, Cargosmart (for non-Danmar Lines moves)

### Mandatory information to be submitted:

- Booking number
- Container number
- Verified Gross Weight (VGM)
- Unit of Measurement (UOM)
- Responsible party (shipper named on the carrier's bill of lading or Danmar B/L)
- Authorized person (in capital letters)

# USEFUL LINKS

Guidelines regarding the verified gross mass of a container carrying cargo:

[www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/cargo-weight](http://www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/cargo-weight)

Guidelines for improving safety and implementing the SOLAS container weight verification requirements:

[www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/cargo-weight](http://www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/cargo-weight)

The IMO/ILO/UNECE Code of Practice for Packing of Cargo Transport Units (CTU) and CTU Code informative materials:

[www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/containers](http://www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/containers)

SMDG, including the implementation guidelines:

[www.smdg.org](http://www.smdg.org)

Local guidelines and authorities:

[www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/global-container-weight-verification-rule-effective-july-1-2016](http://www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/global-container-weight-verification-rule-effective-july-1-2016)

DHL.com:

[www.dhl.com/en/logistics/freight\\_transportation/ocean\\_freight/solas\\_convention.html](http://www.dhl.com/en/logistics/freight_transportation/ocean_freight/solas_convention.html)

In case of further questions, please contact your local DGF office or Sales Representative, or contact us on [www.dhl.com](http://www.dhl.com)

