

Container Weight Verification - just the facts you need to know

In accordance with **IMO Circular MSC. 1/Circ. 1475**, from 1 July 2016 a packed container should not be loaded onto a ship unless the master or his representative and the terminal representative have obtained, **in advance of vessel loading, the verified gross mass (VGM) of the container.**

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OBTAINING THE VGM?

The shipper is responsible for obtaining and documenting the verified gross mass of a packed container.

WHO IS THE SHIPPER?

As per IMO Circular 1475, 'shipper' means a legal entity or a person named on the bill of lading, or equivalent transport documentation, as shipper and/or who (or in whose name or on whose behalf) a contract of carriage has been concluded with a shipping company. The shipper may also be known as the sender or consignor.

WHAT ARE THE VGM REQUIREMENTS?

As per the IMO Circular and AMSA Marine Order 42, the verified gross mass can be obtained using one of two methods.

Method 1: Weighing the Packed Container

Method 2: Weigh all the packages and cargo items including the pallets and then adding the tare mass of the container.

WHAT IS THE RECOGNISED WEIGHING EQUIPMENT AND IT'S ACCURACY?

Based on information received from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), the Marine Order 42 will prescribe the equipment and relevant accuracy standards that will be acceptable and recognised for determining the weight of a container.

The Order will approve the use of measurements obtained in accordance with the national legislation for trade measurement and any other standard of accuracy approved by AMSA and these will be available on AMSA's website.

WHERE THE OBTAINED VGM SHOULD BE DECLARED?

Once a shipper has verified the weight of the container (using one of the two methods) this weight must then be specified on the shipping documents and signed by the shipper or a person duly authorised by the shipper. It can be an electronic signature or the name of the authorised person.

The Pre-Receipt Advice (PRA) is the most commonly used document by shippers to provide the gross weight of the container. The new look PRA reflects the new SOLAS requirements and has been amended accordingly (see figure 1).

Verified Weight Declaration

The image shows a digital form titled 'Verified Weight Declaration'. It has two radio buttons for 'Method 1' and 'Method 2'. Below are input fields for 'Verified Gross Weight *', 'Ctr Tare Weight', and 'Cargo Gross Weight', each with a 'kg' unit label. The 'Date verified' field is set to '22/01/2016' with a calendar icon and the text 'Defaults to todays date'. The 'Name of Declarant *' field has a dropdown menu with 'Defaults to login user's name'. Below are fields for 'Company: *', 'Phone: *', and 'Email: *', each with a dropdown menu and default text. The 'Weight Certificate Details' section includes fields for 'Name of Issuer:', 'Street:', 'City:', and 'Country:' (pre-filled with 'Australia').

FIGURE 1: IMAGE OF REVISED 1- STOP PRA

WHEN SHOULD THE VGM BE DECLARED?

The shipper must ensure the VGM is communicated in shipping documents **sufficiently in advance** to be used by the ship's master or his representative and the terminal representative in the preparation of the ship stowage plan.

Timing for the provision by the shipper of the verified weight of container will be governed by the requirements of the relevant terminals which will need to be prior to the container arriving at the terminal gate.

CONSEQUENCES OF NOT DECLARING THE VGM AND ASSOCIATED INFORMATION

Should a shipper not provide the mandatory information (on the PRA) as mentioned above, the container will not be processed for loading on to a ship. Further, should a container arrive at the gate of a terminal with shipping documentation that does not include the mandatory information, such a container

must not be granted access for loading on to a ship.

As per the revised Marine Order 42, penalties may apply for non-compliance with the requirements.

The accuracy of the VGM obtained for a container is solely the responsibility of the shipper and could be monitored by the relevant regulatory authority.

For further information on: Regulatory Compliance

Contact your local AMSA office,

Shipping Documentation

Contact your shipping line.



WHAT MANDATORY INFORMATION IS REQUIRED BEFORE A CONTAINER CAN BE PROCESSED FOR LOADING?

1. Verified Gross Mass of Container;
2. The method used to obtain the VGM; and
3. The name and contact details of the shipper or person authorised by the shipper to make the declaration