

Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Verified Gross Mass (VGM)

Frequently Asked Questions: SOLAS VGM Requirements



Version dated 20 May, 2016



We take it personally



1. What is the SOLAS Container Weight Verification requirement?

To improve safety in the supply chain, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has made amendments to the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) convention Chapter VI, Regulation 2, Paragraph 6 indicating that all shippers must verify the gross mass of a packed export container prior to vessel loading.

2. When is the effective date?

The requirement will be effective on July 1, 2016.

3. What is a verified gross mass?

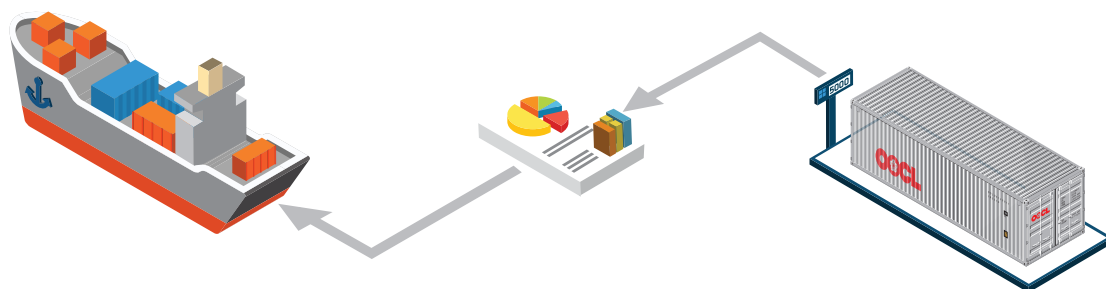
Verified gross mass (VGM) is the total gross mass of a packed container which includes the cargo weight, block & bracing materials and container tare. The VGM must be provided by the shipper for the vessel and terminal operators to arrange for safe vessel/terminal stowage plans.

4. What is the scope of applicability?

According to the IMO's Convention for Safe Containers (CSC), the new VGM requirement applies to all packed containers for stowage onto a ship.

5. Who is responsible for the VGM declaration?

The responsibility for obtaining and documenting the VGM of a packed container lies with the shipper shown on the Ocean Carrier Bill of Lading.





6. How to determine the gross mass of a packed container?

There are two permissible methods prescribed by IMO that shippers may use to determine the container weight of a packed container:

Method 1- Weighing

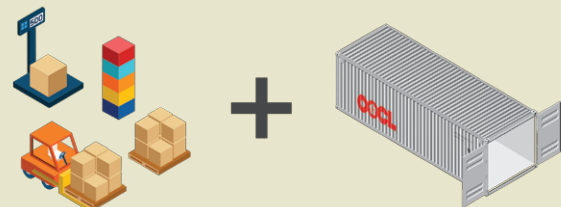
Weighing the packed container using calibrated and certified weighing equipment.



appropriate for any packed containers and any kind of goods.

Method 2 - Calculating

The sum of the single masses = Mass of cargo items + all packages (pallets, dunnage, securing material packed in the container) + container tare weight by means of certified method approved by the national authorized body.



e.g. scrap metal, unbagged grain and other cargo in bulk.

Note: It is inappropriate and impractical for flexitanks or cargo items that do not easily lend themselves to individual weighing of the items to be packed in the container.

IMPORTANT: In both methods, the weighing equipment being used must meet national certification and calibration requirements. Estimated weights are not permitted and a violation of SOLAS regulations.



7. Is a VGM required for empty tanks with residue?

According to established maritime handling procedures, an empty tank with residue is considered a laden container and thus a VGM is required. Please note portable tanks are an example of a container where the use of Method 2 is inappropriate, while Method 1 would be more suitable.

8. How to obtain container tare weight if Method 2 is applied?

a) Marking on Container - In accordance with SOLAS guidelines, the container tare weight marked on the door-side of the container can be used in the VGM calculation.

b) e-Service on OOCL.com - The tare information of OOCL containers is published and conveniently accessible from the OOCL.com website under "Detailed Container Specification Enquiry" to assist in your search.

NOTE: Shipper is not obligated to certify the accuracy of the container tare weight provided by the liner company.

Container surface



e-Service on OOCL.com

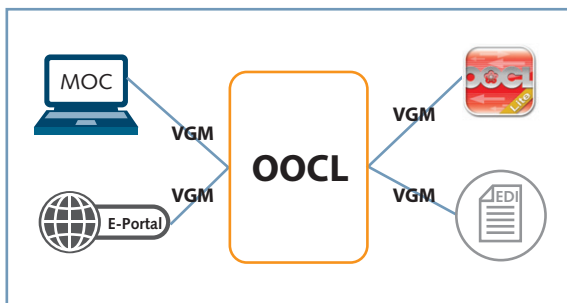


9. How to submit VGM to OOCL?

OOCL highly encourages shippers to provide the VGM information through efficient and convenient 'E-Submission channels'. Should there be a need, OOCL can also cater for 'Manual or paper document-based submissions' to meet certain customer requirements. We, however, DO NOT accept VGM submissions that are communicated to us by phone, voice mail or other verbal means.

E-Submission (preferred options)

- OOCL Web Portal – My OOCL Center (MOC)
- EDI (VERMAS, IFTMIN, or 304 message)
- OOCL Lite – Mobile App
- Other Web Portal Services (e.g. CargoSmart, GT Nexus)



Manual or paper document-based submission

- Document Uploaded to MOC
- E-mail or written request by OOCL's standard form

10. What VGM data elements are required to be submitted?

- Booking number
- Container number
- Verified Gross Mass (VGM) with unit
- Signature of the shipper or authorized person
- Additional information and /or documents required by relevant state authorities, if any

11. Is there a cut off time for VGM submissions to be received by OOCL/ terminal operators?

VGM is used in the preparation of the ship stowage plan. The VGM cut-off time may differ from one terminal to another. The cut-off time information will be communicated to the shipper in the form of Booking Acknowledgement / Confirmation.



- 12. Will the VGM transmission have an impact on cargo/ documentation cut-off times?**
Since there will be a separate cut-off time for the VGM submission, it is unlikely to impose any significant impact on the cargo and documentation cut-off time.
- 13. Is VGM mandatory on the Bill of Lading?**
No, the VGM is not a requirement on the Bill of lading, only the Cargo Weight is required.
- 14. Does OOCL accept an amended VGM?**
Yes, we accept amendment requests but the shipper is responsible for all associated risks and consequences.
- 15. Do marine terminals offer any type of weighing / scale services to help shippers in their VGM submissions?**
Yes, some terminals provide weighing services for VGM submissions. Please kindly check with our local representatives.
- 16. How to handle Intermodal and transshipment containers?**
A container, transported under SOLAS requirements should already have a VGM when leaving the First Port of Load. As such, further weighing at the transshipment port facility is not required.
- 17. Does OOCL need to check the weighing equipment to ensure that it is certified and calibrated to meet VGM requirements?**
OOCL will not check the certification and calibration of the equipment used for the weighing. The shipper must ensure that the weighing equipment or service they choose to use are appropriate and meets VGM requirements.

Exception Handling

18. Will late VGM submission be accepted? Does OOCL still accept a VGM submission after the cut-off time?

VGM cut-off times should always be observed. Currently, OOCL is working closely with our vessel partners and marine terminal operators to determine how best to handle late VGM submissions. We will provide an update on this matter when the information is available.

19. Is there a margin of error for VGM 'accuracy'?

National standards and requirements will determine the local acceptable tolerance level. As such, OOCL will observe the range of tolerance levels set out by each country. Please refer to the 'Regional Implementation Information' on the World Shipping Council website for details.

20. How to handle discrepancies in VGM?

Some terminals announced that packed containers will be weighed for VGM verification. If there is any discrepancy and beyond the defined tolerance level, the VGM of the container weighed at the terminal will be used to determine the proper stowage or handling of the container.

21. Does OOCL weigh the packed container to check against the VGM submitted by the shipper?

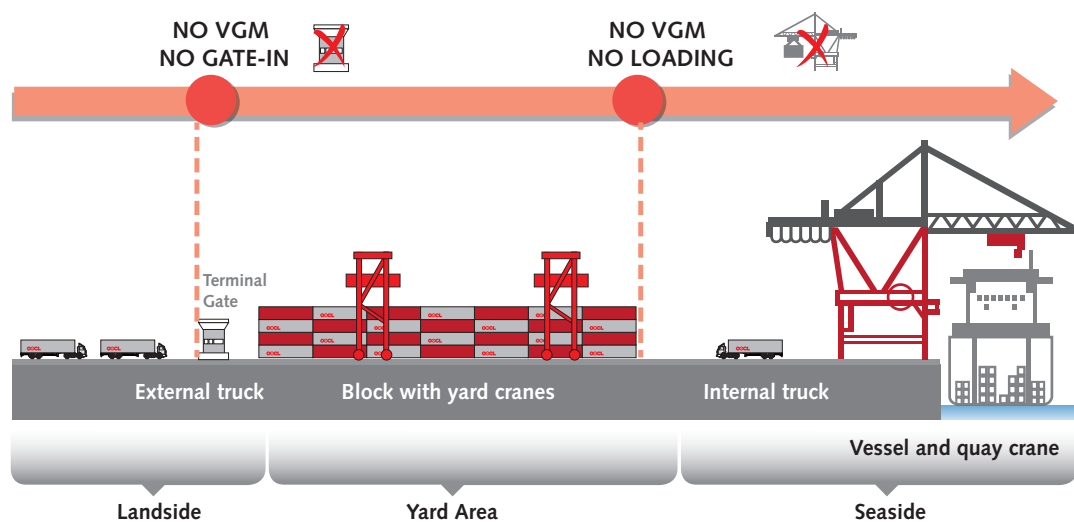
In our commitment to safety, packed containers will be randomly selected for weighing to check against the VGM submitted by the shipper. We are working with our local vendors to identify the location and methodology to perform the inspection. If the weight is beyond the tolerance level, the shipper will be accountable for the inspection fee and penalty where applicable.



Local vendor

22. Do marine terminals accept container gate-in without a VGM?

It depends on the country's regulation and/or terminal policy. Some regulations and policies prefer to carry out all weighing formalities before terminal gate-in or outside the terminal gates. Some terminals have stipulated a "No VGM, No Loading" policy while some others prefer a "No VGM, No Gate-in" rule. Hence, depending on national rules and/ or the terminal's policy, the container may or may not gate in the terminal facility without a valid VGM.



23. What happens if VGM is not provided?

If the shipper fails to provide the VGM of the packed container, the container shall not be loaded on to the ship until it is obtained. The shipper will be accountable for any associated costs from the exceptional handling of the container and face any regulatory penalties or fees that may apply as stipulated by national regulations.

24. What are some possible consequences from failing to meet VGM requirements?

- Stevedoring and/or transport costs associated to the exception handling of the container;
- Inspection and/ or survey costs;
- Storage fees and/ or container demurrage;
- Weighing costs if the carrier/ terminal weighs;
- Stuffing/ de-stuffing or any additional steps required to obtain the VGM;
- Penalties and/ or administrative charges;
- Removing container from the vessel if VGM is found to be incorrect;
- Shipment delays and impact on the supply chain;
- Plus, any other costs that may be incurred.