



# CONTAINER WEIGHING

## ARE YOU IT-READY?



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One of the most pressing issues for all parties involved in container logistics is the new requirement from SOLAS that calls on shippers to obtain the verified gross mass (VGM) of all maritime containers before shipping. The main considerations with regard to this that one has to take into account are:

1. The weighing may not necessarily be executed at the container terminal itself
2. The responsibility for obtaining the VGM for full containers lays with the shipper

There are also quite a few ways of obtaining the VGM technically, however, for the purposes of this paper I would indicate two essential ones:

1. Weighing of a container using certified scales (for example a weighbridge or a form of load-sensing device)
2. Weight calculation where gross weight of the load inside the container is added to the empty container weight

### RESPONSIBILITY

The responsibility for validating a VGM lies on the federal controlling authorities

which may vary from country to country. In Russia this authority would be the National Maritime Register, and they propose an electronic declaration of the VGM that is authenticated by an e-signature or a paper declaration insured by the organisation responsible for cargo weighing.

In order to exchange data containing VGMs between the parties involved in the container logistics chain, the SMDG foundation has come up with new EDIFACT format known as VERMAS. Moreover, SMDG makes changes to COPARN, CUSCAR, CODECO and BAPLIE. Thus, the new procedure for all the parties is as follows:

- The shipper conducts the weighing and obtains a VGM
- The shipper sends it to the shipping line (EDI) and the shipping line accumulates the data from different shippers and then sends new EDIs to the respective terminals

The main task of a container terminal is to account for the VGM during the planning process. This excludes full containers without the VGM indicator from the loading list. Both the loading plan

with VGM authenticated containers and the factual data about loaded containers should be sent to the shipping line in BAPLIE.

Since most container terminals use a TOS for planning and operations management, it is essential that the TOS is updated to take into account the specifics of the new business processes described above.

For example, the TOS must be capable of:

- Full VGM accountability
- VGM data availability control
- In case the container is weighed at the container terminal, a TOS must create a respective record of it and based on this VGM record a VERMAS message must be formed and sent out
- A possibility of creating a ship loading plan based on VGM availability for the loaded containers and interdiction to load containers without VGM
- Full traceability of container movements and when, where and how the VGM for the container was obtained
- Automatically block a container from loading when a loading list is generated



or on the attempt to load the container onto the ship

- Notify different users on the event of obtaining the VGM from scales indicating the method used for that, the declaration number, the place of weighing, the responsible organisation and all other related parameters
- VGM declaration creation

In case the VGM is obtained by the shipper before sending the container to the terminal there must be an option to indicate the VGM data by the user in the truck visit inquiry submitted to the container terminal by the shipper or cargo forwarder via the Internet or any other viable means of communication. In case the container was delivered to the container terminal without the VGM data

available, then there must be an option to create and process weighing inquiries.

#### CONCLUSION

It is still hard to predict what issues will be faced by shippers, terminals and shipping lines after the first of July, 2016 deadline. It is almost certain that there will be various difficulties depending on the methods of calculating the VGM and the accuracy of the obtained parameters from country to country as the workflow will differ depending on the local regulators ensuring the process. However, there is no doubt that the preparedness of terminal operators to comply with new requirements will heavily depend on the IT infrastructure and readiness of the current software to operate within the new workflow.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniel Pershing is Head of Marketing with Solvo Ltd. He has over 12 years' experience in marketing, sales and product management of IT and telecom solutions. Since joining Solvo in 2013, Daniel is responsible for strategic marketing and product management of TOS systems, WMS and other company solutions and services both on the home market and overseas.

#### ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

Solvo is one of the leading providers of supply chain execution software solutions such as the Solvo.TOS for marine and inland container terminals, break-bulk terminals, and multi-purpose facilities. It also provides Solvo.WMS for warehouses and depots. Founded in 1995, the company has completed over 200 automation projects in different countries from the Baltics to the Pacific Ocean.

#### ENQUIRIES

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