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To: Transport Industry Operators

VGM 1 July 2016

The amendment to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) 1974 Chapter VI, Regulation 2 in respect of the verified gross mass of a container carrying cargo (laden container) is for entry into force globally on 1 July 2016.

This requires compulsory verification of the gross mass of a laden container prior to loading on the ships to which SOLAS Chapter VI applies.

The new regulation provides 2 methods for verification of the gross mass of a laden container.

Method 1

After stuffing and sealing a container, the shipper can arrange for weighing of the laden container by using a weighing scale approved by the Marine Department. The ship Master and the terminal operator should be provided with the verified container's gross mass figure for planning the ship stowage. The shipper should have a weighing scale operator's weighing document showing the weighing scale's authorization number, the name of the weighing scale operator, the date of weighing, the container number and the seal number with signature of the weighing scale operator and company stamp. The list of approved weighing scales is published in the Marine Department's website.

Method 2

The shipper can weigh all the cargoes, including the pallets, dunnage and other securing materials to be stuffed in the container, and add the tare mass of the container to the sum using a method approved by the Marine Department. Before using this method for gross mass verification, the shipper should submit the application of registration to the Marine Department for approval. The shipper should declare the verified gross mass to the carrier by quoting the registration number. If the shipper's application is successful, the name of the shipper, contact details and registration number will be published in the Marine Department's website.

No matter which method is used, the shipper has to make a shipper's declaration to the carrier after obtaining the verified gross mass. Otherwise, the laden container shall not be allowed to be loaded on board the ship. SOLAS imposes an obligation on the carrier and the terminal operator not to load a laden container on board the ship if the shipper has not submitted the declaration on the verified gross mass to the carrier.

For the details of the new VGM regulations, the shipper should contact the Marine Industrial Safety Section of the Marine Department at telephone number 2852 4477 or email miss@mardep.gov.hk or visit the Marine Department's website.

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