

New Container Weight Requirements Effective July 1, 2016

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This summer, new container weight requirements go into effect for containers shipped overseas. The International Maritime Organization has amended the Safety of Life at Sea Convention ("SOLAS") to require that shippers must verify the gross mass of their containers before those containers will be loaded onto a ship. If a shipper does not provide the verified gross mass or "VGM" of the packed shipping container, it will not be loaded onto a ship. This weighing requirement goes into effect on July 1.

The new regulations recognize two methods for verifying container weights. Method 1 involves weighing the packed container after it has been loaded and sealed. Method 2 requires that all of the cargo and other contents of the container are weighed separately, and that weight is added to the container's tare weight. The shipper (or a third party under an agreement with the shipper) has the responsibility to weigh the container under either Method 1 or Method 2, and provide a shipping document listing the VGM to the port with the container. Without the documented VGM, the port will not load the container onto a ship, as the VGM will be used for vessel stow planning. Thus, the container's voyage will be delayed and the container could be denied entry to the port facilities absent the VGM certification. A link to the text of the SOLAS amendments can be found [here](#).

At this stage, most ports are not offering weighing services and the responsibility for supplying the VGM rests solely on the shipper. As many shippers may not be equipped to weigh their containers prior to shipment, or may use third parties and freight forwarders to arrange for the transport and loading of these containers, shippers need to be aware of the changes in port loading procedures and update their contracts with their buyers, carriers, and ports accordingly. Also, shippers must understand the effect of the new SOLAS rules on their terms and conditions of sale, especially shipping terms such as "FOB" or "EX WORKS". As these regulations go into effect, Barley Snyder will be reviewing industry standards to keep up to date on how international shippers are implementing the SOLAS requirements.

If you ship your products via containers to overseas clients, it is important that you promptly review your SOLAS compliance status. If you have further questions, you may contact the authors or any other member of Barley Snyder's [Business Law Group](#).

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