

## SOLAS- Verified Gross Mass (VGM) Update 2017

### What is this "SOLAS" regulation?

Declaring your container's gross mass has always been a requirement under the shipping regulations. However, with more frequent accidents occurring and delays due to mis-declared weight, it has become a priority to ensure these weights are verified before loading the containers onto a vessel.



SOLAS regulation states the approval of two methods in verifying the gross mass of packed containers and both these methods must be done with calibrated and certified equipment.

**Method 1:** Weighing the container after it has been packed

**Method 2:** Weighing all the cargo and contents of the container and adding those weights to the container's tare weight.

No estimated weight is permitted and the weighing equipment must meet national certification and calibration standards.

The shipper is the person whose goods go into the container and they are responsible for weighing the container by any of the two approved methods and declaring the weight on shipping documents. The Shipper can assign weighing to a third party such as an approved freight operator, but it is the Shipper who is responsible for the declaration. The declared weight must be verified and signed by the responsible person that was present at the time of weighment.



These safety measures are critical to ensure a safe working environment for people and any potential damage to equipment or property. Combining two WSC surveys spanning years 2008 -2013 indicates an average loss at sea of 546 containers per year excluding catastrophic events and 1679 containers per year including catastrophic events.



[World Shipping Report on Container Losses](#)

SOLAS took effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2016. "The Committee agreed that Administrations and port State control authorities should adopt a practical and pragmatic approach when verifying compliance with the requirements of [SOLAS regulations VI/2.4 to VI/2.6](#), for a period of three months after 1 July 2016". This meaning that all transition had to be completed and full compliance took effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2016.

**What is best practice and how does it impact your business?**

Best practice plays a vital role in operational decision making. Safety of life at sea is only one aspect in the supply chain. There are further considerations for safety from door to door including mass weight regulations for road transport and axle weight safety limits for transport operators.



A pro-active approach is needed to improve accuracy and reliability of equipment used to verify weight. You should actively scrutinize the methods you use to obtain a verified weight and understand the implication for inaccurate weights. This is not just a consideration for VGM compliance but also costs, safety and effectiveness of mass management within the entire organisation.

With a USD4 trillion container shipping industry and an existing tolerance of up to 5% on weight accuracy depending on the method selected, the potential value lost is astronomical.

Carriers and Freight handlers are concerned not just with containers being overloaded, but are just as concerned about under-loaded (over-declared) weights. Shipping loan masters rely on the declaration to properly manage ship loading and weight distribution. Potential liability on over-

reported or under-reported weights are huge given the value of goods being loaded in and around each container.

We have seen some collaboration such as OCEMA (ocean carrier equipment management association) that has implemented a best practice that will look after the technical and operational aspects of VGM requirements.

Regularly logistics organisations are being impacted with penalties and road accidents due to overloaded vehicles. This can all be avoided when reliable weighing equipment is used that could indicate accurate weights and help plan the correct load distribution on vehicles. Not only does reliable equipment improve accuracy and efficiency, it also improves the bottom line by maximising legal carrying capacities, limiting costs and minimising risks.



The world is moving toward consistent rules for safer work practices, mass management, axle loads and chain of responsibility. It is critical that best practice is in place and ensure continuous improvement programs are actively engaged. If a high standard can be upheld, the number of accidents, injuries and damage to people and property can be minimized.

Every company has the goal of being 100% free of accidents, maximising revenue and being compliant with [regulatory authorities](#).

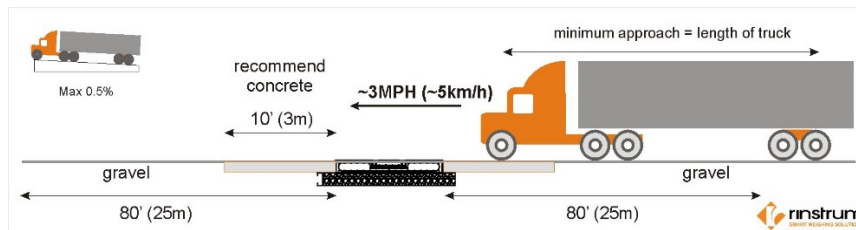
### What are the options?

There are currently smart weighing systems available tailored to a solution for your site.

If you export any goods that require a VGM certificate that is trade certified to class III then the **conWEIGHr** is the Solution.



If you require an in motion solution for your fleet **axleWEIGHr** is an award winning option



Author: Bjorn Viljoen – Industry specialist at Rinstrum, heavy capacity weighing



Rinstrum Pty Ltd is a specialist in industrial weighing applications. Formed in 1992, Rinstrum is based in Brisbane Australia and has operation in Germany, United States and Sri Lanka.

41 Success Street, Acacia Ridge Qld Australia +61 (0)7 3216 7166 [sales@rinstrum.com](mailto:sales@rinstrum.com)