SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea)
Effective from July 1, 2016, the Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS) requires the shipper named on ocean carrier’s bill of lading has to provide a verified gross mass (VGM) for packed container. The declaration of the verified gross mass should be signed and dated by a person duly authorized by the shipper and submit to the carrier via either electronic interchange channels or a physical shipping document. Without a verified gross mass, the packed container shall not be loaded aboard ship.

The rules prescribe two methods by which the shipper may obtain the verified gross mass of a packed container:

- **Method 1**, upon the conclusion of packing and sealing a container, the shipper may weigh, or have arranged that a third party weigh, the packed container.
- **Method 2**, the shipper (or, by arrangement of the shipper, a third party) may weigh all packages and cargo items, including the mass of pallets, dunnage and other packing and securing material to be packed in the container, and add the tare mass of the container to the sum of the single masses of the container’s contents. (Estimating the weight of a container’s contents is not permitted.)

In respect of both method 1 and 2, the weighing equipment used must meet the applicable accuracy standards and requirements of the State in which the equipment is being used.

For more details and FAQ, please refer to below information:

SOLAS – Terminals Working Procedures in North America

• Group 1: Terminals will reject container at gate if no VGM received from ocean carriers for said shipment
  – Maher Terminal in New York
  – WBCT Terminal in Los Angeles
  – ITS and Husky Terminals in west coasts
• Group 2: Terminals won’t reject container at gate no matter VGM received from ocean carriers for said shipment or not. Ocean carriers have to notify terminals to roll the container before loading on vessel if VGM couldn’t be received before loading.
• Based on the comments from the Coast Guard during the Feb/18 meeting with FMC, they said the enforcement mechanism will be as follows:
  • A) If containers arrive at the terminal without the VGM after July/1, they will declare the box “manifestly unsafe”. The container will be put on hold until the gross weight can be known and documented.
  • B) If the container is weighed at the terminal and the VGM does not match, the container will need to be reweighed and a new VGM issued.
    – Vancouver, Canada terminals
    – Port of Georgia
• Group 3: Terminal will weigh the container at gate and use it as VGM for Shipper and for Ocean carriers
  – South Carolina Ports
How to meet the container weight mandate

As a shipper, what are your options?

- **METHOD 1**
  Take a loaded container over a weighbridge, subtract the weight of the truck, chassis, and fuel to get the weight of the packed container.

- **METHOD 2**
  Weigh each item – including its packaging, palleting, dunnage and other packing and securing materials – going into the box. Add that sum to the weight of the container to find the weight of the packed container.

What are you required to do?

Provide a document signed by the shipper to the shipping line and terminal declaring that the shipper verified the weight and that it was weighed properly.

What happens in the case of noncompliance?

There are all kinds of possibilities for what could happen to the box that failed to provide the certified weight document but none are settled. Terminals may choose to hold a container or send it back, but whatever happens, the ship will leave and the container will not.
The Tare Weight is located on the back right door of containers. The weight would need to be taken before container is backed into the dock for loading to be added to the weight of the contents for the VGM.
• Rail Ramps will not reject container at Ramp gate
• Rail Ramps will not verify VGM however they require and assume the weight from Rail Billing is VGM, therefore, shipper should provide VGM before truckers send Rail Billing.
• Rail company will send Rail Billing VGM data to terminals via EDI for On/Off dock shipments
SOLAS — How MTA collects VGM data from Shippers

• Shippers will provide VGM Certified Weight Certificate to MTA via email
  – Provide container number, booking number and container weight if shipper decided to use method one (by physical weighing)
  – Provide container number, booking number and cargo weight if shipper decided to use method two (by calculating).
    • Shipper can input (cargo weight + weight printed on container) on weight certificate.

• Once MTA receives VGM from Shipper we will send VGM via EDI to terminals or carriers immediately
SOLAS – MTA collects VGM Working Procedures

- For terminals who reject container at gate (Group 1) when no VGM received.
  - Shipper is responsible for providing VGM to MTA before in gate. MTA will forward VGM via EDI to carrier.

- For terminals who accept container no matter VGM received or not (Group 2), and for the Terminals who weigh container for Shipper (Group 3)
  - Shipper is responsible for providing VGM to MTA before Booking Cut Off date, otherwise the booking will be rolled to next vessel.
  - Shipper will be responsible for all the costs for booking roll over at port.
SOLAS - MTA VGM VERIFICATION PROCESS -LCL

- SHIPPER SUPPLIED WEIGHT CERTIFICATION.
- With the upcoming July 1, 2016 implementation of the SOLAS, (Safety Of Life At Sea), Verified Gross Mass container weight certification program, Midwest Transatlantic Lines, Inc. is requesting the following procedures to be met by all of our valued customers to be in compliance with this new International regulation.
- Since MTA Lines is the acting ocean carrier in all LCL shipments for international export, we are required to submit VGM certification for all cargo to be loaded into containers for ocean export prior to arrival at the piers for loading of the containers on to the vessels.
- Below are the procedures that need to be followed so that your shipments are not held up.
- Shippers will be asked to initially supply MTA with a form of Scale Calibration Certificate issued by the authority in their local area conforming to the guidelines for calibration of scales set forth by the local authority. This will only be necessary upon initial set up and when new calibration is performed to re-certify per local authority guidelines.
- This weight is to include product, the packaging and the means that the products are loaded into or on for handling. These include: totes, bins, crates, wooden boxes, drums, pallets, etc.
- Certification can be a written statement from shipper signed by a person duly authorized by the shipper, either on the inland bill of lading, dock receipt or packing list to certify the VGM weight. This document must be sent electronically via email or fax to MTA immediately before or upon pickup of cargo.
- Should shipper not be able to weigh their cargo prior to leaving their facility MTA will provide this service at the export terminal for a fee to be advised per market price.
- Any fines or penalties accessed due to shipper’s supplied weight being found inaccurate will be for the account of the shipper.
Since, MTA Lines is acting as your agent for international export container shipments, we are required to submit VGM certification for all cargo loaded into containers for ocean export. The VGM is to be submitted to carrier prior to arrival at the piers for loading of the containers on to the vessels. Without the VGM containers will not be loaded onto the vessel.

Below are the procedures that need to be followed so that your shipments are not held up.

- Shippers will be asked to initially supply MTA with a form of Scale Calibration Certificate issued by the authority in their local area conforming to the guidelines for calibration of scales set forth by the local authority. This will only be necessary upon initial set up and when new calibration is performed to re-certify per local authority guidelines.

- This weight needs to include product, the packaging and the means that the products are loaded into or on for handling along with any dunnage used for blocking and bracing. These include: totes, bins, crates, wooden boxes, drums, pallets, 2 x 4 wood, loose pallets, airbags, etc. This total weight is then added to the container tare weight located on the back of the container doors to give the total weight / VGM.

- Certification can be a written statement from shipper signed by a person duly authorized by the shipper, either on the inland bill of lading, dock receipt or packing list to certify the VGM weight. This document must be sent electronically via email or fax to MTA immediately before or upon loading of container(s).

- Should shipper not be able to weigh their cargo prior to leaving their facility, MTA can provide this service, provided the trucker will be able to stop at a weigh station for a fee to be advised per market price.

- Any fines or penalties assessed due to shipper’s supplied weight being found inaccurate will be for the account of the shipper.