



April/2016

Institutionalization of the method of gross mass verification of maritime containers for export in JAPAN

1 Background

The shipper shall provide the master or his representative with necessary information regarding the cargo being shipped including its gross mass in advance to be used in the preparation of the ship stowage plan. This is to ascertain the safety requirements as set forth by the Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS) for safe navigational purposes. Despite such obligations imposed by such a reputable international convention, inaccurate declaration of container weights had been creating issues for some time that concerned many in the shipping industry. As a result of long-term discussions in IMO, a new SOLAS amendment will be enforced in July 2016, requiring all exporting containers to be weighed before loading them on board a ship. This is to be done by methods in compliance with the convention, which will ensure accuracy of gross weight information.

Japan (MLIT) has just amended and issued relevant Ministerial ordinances and notices (cf. amendments of relevant regulations under Ship Safety Act and issuing of new notices to define the details) to implement the new scheme in order to ensure the compliance of SOLAS amendments, and these regulations are promulgated in this April.

And MLIT published the guideline which introduces the gist of the new scheme and promotes the much-needed understanding of industries related to exports of containers in order to ensure smooth implementation, and conducted lecture sessions for various stakeholders, such as maritime authorities, and manufacturing, trading, freight forwarding, and stevedoring concerns, and other relevant parties.

2 Points of new the domestic scheme

2.1 How to weigh a packed container

In case of the cargo carried in a container, shippers shall provide the captain or representative of the container stations with information on verified gross mass (VGM) of export containers, either by:

- Method-1 weighing the packed container using an appropriate measuring equipment
- Method-2 weighing each cargo item, including pallets, dunnage and other packing materials, and calculating the gross mass by adding the tare-weight of a container



** As a supplement to it, shippers can entrust the verification process of weighing the export containers to other companies/organizations, such as specialty measuring facilities, other than weighing by themselves.

2.2 Definition of a “shipper”

An individual or a company whose name is listed in the B/L (Bill of Lading), Waybill or equivalent transport document as the Shipper. (ex. a name listed in the Master B/L as a shipper)

2.3 Applicable measurement equipment

- ◆ Specified Measuring instruments defined in the Measurement Act (see the website below),
(<http://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/law/detail/?vm=04&re=01&id=82>)
- ◆ Measurement equipment calibrated by manufacturers or repairing service agencies, or regularly maintained by the owners or persons in charge, so that the measurement error shall be within $\pm 5\%$ of the actual weight.

2.4 Tare weight of an empty container

In case the tare weight of an empty container is properly marked on its surface in accordance with JIS (Japanese Industrial Standards), ISO (International Organization for Standardization) or equivalent international standards, then this marked weight can be used for calculating the total weight of packed containers using Method 2.

3 The Notation and Registration for weighing a packed container

Parties who will verify the gross weight of such containers must apply the Notification issued by MLIT or use the data on Registration to MLIT and prepare operating procedures in commercial format before 1st July, when the SOLAS amendment will be in force.

- A shipper who verifies gross mass of the containers by itself **【the Notification】**
- A third party which verifies gross mass of the containers as consigned by a shipper for commercial purposes **【the Registration】**

3.1 Procedure for verifying gross mass of a container carrying cargo

The procedure shall include contents as follows;

- i. Process of measuring and calculating the weight
- ii. How to maintain the measurement equipment and ensure accuracy



- iii. Who will sign the shipping document including VGM
- iv. How to communicate VGM information to shipping companies or a representative of container yards
- v. Which contents are not measured for Notification/Registration member subjected to procedure and required information for it
- vi. How to record the data and process of measuring and/or calculating the weight
- vii. Outsourcing agreements or provisions related to a part of measuring and/or calculating
- viii. How to check the items (1 to 7) designated above by internal and/or external audits

3.2 Necessary information required for the Notification

3.2.1 Property of an applicant

- i. Company name, address, name of its representative and its corporate number assigned by National Tax Agency
- ii. Business category and abstract
- iii. Person in charge of the weighing process and his/her title
- iv. Addresses of places where the weighing process is carried out in accordance with Method 1 or 2
- v. Measurement category to be applied (Method 1, Method 2 or both)

3.2.2 Required attachments

- i. Reference documents required for weighing the packed containers (document name, document number, issue date, etc.)
- ii. Copies of the certificate of ISO 9001 or AEO (Authorized Economic Operator) , if applicable

3.3 Necessary information required for Registration

3.3.1 Property of an applicant

- i. Company name, address, name of the representative and the corporate number assigned by National Tax Agency
- ii. Addresses of places where the weighting process is carried out in accordance with Method 1 or 2
- iii. Person in charge of the weighing process and his/her title
- iv. Measurement category to be applied (Method 1, Method 2 or both)



3.3.2 Required attachments

- i. The Articles of Incorporation and The Certificate of Registered Matters
- ii. Executive officers and their profiles
- iii. Documents ensuring the measurement equipment used for weighing packed containers in accordance with Method 1.
- iv. List of the persons engaging in weighing packed containers.
- v. Operational procedure for weighing
- vi. Certification licenses, registers or equivalent documents ensuring whether the persons assigned for the job are qualified with adequate knowledge and experience to carry out the required procedure
- vii. Copy of the ISO 9001 certificate or that of AEO (Authorized Economic Operator) , if applicable

Please note that a part of the process or the required attachments for the Notification/Registration can be omitted if the company is ISO 9001 or AEO certified.

3.4 Validity period of the Registration

The Registration is valid for 3 years and application for it to be updated every 3 years. As to Notification, the domestic scheme does not define the validity period for Notification members in particular, MLIT will require them to report their activities at least once every 3 years.

3.5 Information on Notification/Registration member is available in the website

MLIT officially provides stakeholders with fundamental information on Notification and Registration members in its website as follows.

- ◆ Name of Notification/Registration members
- ◆ Issue date of the Notification/Registration number
- ◆ Serial numbers granted by MLIT

3.6 Audit of the Notification/Registration members

MLIT audits the Notification/Registration members if necessary.

If you should have any queries, please contact the following:

Dangerous Goods Transport Office
Inspection and Measurement Division
Maritime Bureau
Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism
2-1-3 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan
Telephone: +81 3 5253 8639
Telex: +81 3 5253 1644
E-mail: solas_container@mlit.go.jp