

Additional Information on SOLAS Container Weight Verification Requirements

As previously advised, effective July 1, 2016, the so-called SOLAS Container Weight Verification Requirements go into effect. At that time, the shippers listed on the carrier's master bill of lading will be required to provide the vessel with a certified gross weight sufficiently in advance of vessel loading so it can be used in the preparation of the ship's stowage plan.

In order to provide some additional guidance, the World Shipping Council – acting in conjunction with several other international organizations – has just issued a document entitled Verified Gross Mass Industry FAQs. This document raises and then answers some of the questions that have been circulating for the past several months and, accordingly, is worth reviewing. In general, there are no great surprises, as the FAQs essentially reiterate the guidance that both the World Shipping Council and the NCBFAA have already provided on this matter. Nonetheless, it is useful background to review the document, as it may answer some additional questions you may have had.

Without going through the entire document at this time, it is probably worth highlighting several of the issues that the FAQs discuss, such as:

- Not surprisingly, the SOLAS rules do not provide for anyone to assume there is some margin of error that is acceptable with respect to the certified weight that is supplied. Instead, the FAQs make it clear that the shipper is to use a scale calibrated in accordance with state regulations. If that is done correctly, the shipper need not be concerned that the actual weight at some point may vary, as they can safely assume that the certified weight provided to the carrier will fall within whatever government enforcement tolerances may be in effect.
- The FAQs reiterate that all shipments must be the result of reliable, certified weights, and there is to be no estimating.
- In determining the tare weight of the container, shippers can and should rely on the weight printed on the container and not be concerned about the condition or age of the box.
- An NVOCC can properly rely on the certified weight provided by the underlying customer, although it would be prudent to ensure that it is authorized to essentially re-endorse that certification and then provide that to the carrier.

A copy of the new FAQs are available on the Association's website.