



CONTAINER FREIGHT STATIONS & Weight Verification Compliance

New weight rule to boost shipping safety

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In efforts to streamline operations at ports globally, it will soon be mandatory to verify the gross weight of every packed export cargo container prior to loading on board a ship. A verified actual gross mass of the container will need to be provided in advance, with the shipping documentation stating the method used for verification. This requirement comes into force on July 1, 2016. It follows the recent amendments to the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention, which have been adopted by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). The Kenya government, a signatory to the SOLAS Convention, will be responsible for ensuring compliance at Mombasa. As such, no ship will be allowed to load containers whose gross weights have not been verified. IMO has noted the urgency for accurate weight due to increased container stack collapses, vessel instability, injuries to dock and vessel workers, damage to cargo, stress to ships and port machinery, insurance claims, added costs, and

significant environmental impact. The new development will add to the streamlining of operations at the Mombasa Port to improve movement and handling of cargo, among them the introduction of Container Freight Stations, popularly known as CFS, to ease congestion at the Kenya Ports Authority (KPA) holding grounds. CFS provide secondary customs clearance points for cargo, and are located within and near the port. They receive cargo under bond for imports or unbonded cargo for exports. They act as container, mixed cargo and motor vehicle terminals, providing the port with additional capacity for cargo stacking and a platform for cargo inspection by various interveners. They also act as tax collection points for the Customs Service Department, and as storage area for goods that are yet to be cleared. Hence, they are sometimes referred to as inland ports. The CFS industry in Kenya came into existence in 2007. They now number about 24. The freight stations provide customers with various benefits, such as negotiating favourable terms, extended free time and storage waivers. Clients are free to nominate the CFS to handle their cargo.

Implementation of IMO – SOLAS Convention Amendment on Container Weight Verification



In November 2014, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) adopted mandatory amendments to the International Convention for the safety of life at sea ("SOLAS") Chapter VI, Part A, Regulations 2. **An IMO circular (MSC/Circular 1475) issued on June 4, 2014 provides guidance on the implementation of the SOLAS amendments that become globally applicable and effective on July 1, 2016.** In compliance with the SOLAS amendment, an export laden container will not be loaded on board a ship unless the Master or his Representative (The Shipper) and the terminal operator have obtained the verified gross mass (VGM) of the container, sufficiently in advance of the vessel loading. As per the SOLAS amendment, the verified gross mass shall be obtained by the shipper or a third party on his behalf using one of the two methods: **Method 1:** Weighing the packed container by shipper or his nominated representative. **Method 2:** Weigh the packages and cargo items, including any other contents, and then adding tare mass of the container. The tare is the weight indicated on the container or otherwise made available, for example, on the carriers' website.

For both methods used, VGM should be obtained using calibrated and certified equipment that meet the standards and requirements of Weights and Measures Department of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives for Kenya Shippers. SOLAS Convention is applicable global law. It places a responsibility on the shipper of a packed container, regardless of who packed the container to verify and provide the accurate containers' gross weight to the ocean carrier or its representative and the terminal operator prior to it being loaded on a ship. SOLAS regulation requires that a container is not packed to more than the maximum gross mass indicated on the Safety Approval Plate under the International Convention for safe containers (CSC) as amended. Container with a gross mass exceeding the maximum permitted gross mass may not be loaded on board a ship. All consequential costs imposed on an unloaded container arising from mis-declared gross verified mass will be borne by the shipper. **Note:** No export laden container will be loaded on board a ship without a Verified Gross Mass (VGM) effective July 1st 2016.