

NO 'TOLERANCE' ON NEW CONTAINER WEIGHING REGULATIONS

Birmingham NEC, UK, Thursday 12th May 2016 - Despite rumours about 'tolerance' regarding the SOLAS container weighing rules coming into effect on 1st July, there is little room for manoeuvre for most shippers.

Containers which are already at sea on 1st July and need transshipment are the only (deepsea) ones which will be able to avoid being subject to the rules, Keith Bradley, Technical Advisor at the Maritime Coastguard Agency (MCA) told a packed seminar room at Multimodal 2016 this week. (It is already well-known that ro-ro containers on shortsea routes are exempt.)

Lars Kjaer, Senior VP, World Shipping Council, said there were two main changes to the rules regarding container weighing:

- 1) shippers need to provide a VGM (Verified Gross Mass) – an estimated weight is no longer good enough, and
- 2) carriers and ports/terminals are jointly responsible for not loading a packed container which does not have a VGM, onto a ship.

"Loading will not happen. There is no leeway. This is global law which shipping lines will follow, so no VGM, no load."

Kjaer says there needed to be close collaboration between shippers, carriers and terminals to work with these rules or "international trade will suffer".

For instance, cut-off times for shippers to communicate the VGM to the carrier will be determined by the individual carrier according to local practice and arrangements.

Chris Welsh, Director of Global and European Policy, FTA, explained that there are two methods of determining VGM:

- 1) weighing the packed container using calibrated and certified weighing equipment and

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- 2) weighing all packages and cargo items, including packing materials and the tare weight of the container and adding them all together.

In order to be able to use the second option in the UK, shippers need to be approved and accredited by the MCA.

If they want this to happen by 1st July, they need to make application to the MCA by 16th June at the latest.

Captain Richard Brough of ICHCA stressed that communication, compliance and contingency were the three watchwords.

“If you are not ready to comply by 1st July, you need to have a plan.”

Luckily, most UK ports say they will supply a weighing facility – at a cost – so that is always an option, at least in the short-term.

Peregrine Storrs-Fox, Risk Management Director, TT Club, stressed that even meeting the new SOLAS requirements would not be enough.

“The rules have been designed to improve safety and there is more risk from poorly packed or poorly distributed cargo throughout the container than from mis-declared weight per se.”

All participants urged shippers to use their organisations’ websites to find out more and a later session at Multimodal saw several companies explaining their container weighing solutions to interested delegates.

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Multimodal is the UK and Ireland's leading freight transport and logistics exhibition, which also features a series of topical seminars and master classes, and hosts a Shippers' Village, giving freight buyers a private space to meet logistics suppliers.

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Multimodal 2016 was the biggest in the show's history, with over 325 exhibitors and a record-breaking attendance of over 9, 000 supply chain executives.

Seventy-two expert speakers were leading over 21 workshop and panel debates covering industry trends and latest legislation.

Multimodal 2017 will take place from 4th to 6th April 2017 at the Birmingham NEC.

Visit multimodal.org.uk

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