New Edifact Message Type
VERMAS – Verification of Gross Mass

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In this presentation

- Review on VERMAS development
- Lessons Learned
- Outlook – Next steps
The IMO Guidelines on VGM (Verified Gross Mass) were published in **November 2014**. They prescribe the Shipper’s responsibility to provide a VGM as part of the shipping documents, with effect from **1st July 2016**.

The VGM reporting requirements are described as a simple flow: **Shipper ➔ Carrier ➔ Terminal ➔ Vessel**. Carrier and Terminal have a joint responsibility to ensure that a container without VGM is not loaded.

**Challenge**

- The reporting requirements could only be derived from the IMO legal text. No party had real-life experience. The role of portals, forwarders, NVOs, weighing stations etc. was not defined. Many parties began only in 2nd quarter 2016 to realize the impact of VGM on their processes.

- The impact of the VGM requirements were dramatically underestimated by literally all stakeholders initially.
VERMAS Timeline

- **Dec. 2014**: SMDG first discussion about SOLAS VGM regulation
- **March 2015**: Carriers find that a new message would be needed
- **April 2015**: SMDG meeting in Malmoe agrees to pursue the development of a new message
- **July 2015**: T&L Group agrees and supports the development of a new message
- **April 2015**: SMDG meeting in Malmoe agrees to pursue the development of a new message
- **Sept. 2015**: SMDG meeting in Malta approves the proposal for the new VERMAS message
- **4. Nov. 2015**: SMDG publishes first VERMAS MIG version 0.4
- **6. Nov. 2015**: UN/CEFACT Forum in Marseille: General approval for VERMAS message structure
- **27.4.2016**: VERMAS officially approved by UN/CEFACT
- **13.6.2016**: VERMAS officially published in D.16A directory
- **23.6.2016**: SMDG publishes final MIG version VERMAS 1.0
- **27.4.2016**: UN/CEFACT project for new message
- **23.6.2016**: SMDG publishes final MIG version VERMAS 1.0
- **Sept. 2016**: UN/CEFACT project for the VERMAS successfully closed.
Lessons learned

- **Speedy progress**
  SMDG has reacted quickly on the new requirements, long before most stakeholders even realized the regulation.

- **Good cooperation**
  SMDG and UN/CEFACT have jointly developed and published a completely new Edifact message structure and the implementation guide in a very short timeframe.

- **Successful development**
  Since the start of VGM requirement on 1st July 2016 the VERMAS has been implemented and used by innumerable parties from all sectors of the maritime industry. The VERMAS satisfies the needs of all stakeholders and it has become the world standard for VGM reporting. Only odd critical voices were heard.

- **Public awareness of SMDG**
  The SMDG expertise for VGM was taken for granted and not doubted. SMDG became a focal point for information around VGM transmission requirements. The public awareness of SMDG as standardization organization grew considerably.

- **Edifact still going strong**
  EDI in the maritime industry is still centered on Edifact messages. There was no doubt that the VERMAS should be developed in the Edifact framework and not in other formats such as for example XML, JSON or Webservice. All stakeholders are operating Edifact environment and could therefore implement the VERMAS easily.
Why a completely new message?

1. **New processes**
   There are new process steps that are not covered by existing message types. For example reporting from a weighing station to the shipper, or the weight from the terminal to the carrier or from the carrier to the shipper.

2. **Different timing for weight transmission in current messages**
   In many cases the existing messages are sent at a different time than the VGM is known or is required. The existing messages are sent too early or too late for transmission of the VGM.

3. **One new message easier than changing many existing messages**
   Shippers, carriers and terminals need to change a large number of message versions on a fixed deadline. Many of them find it easier to implement one new message for this special purpose of VGM reporting than upgrading many existing message versions and test simultaneously with many EDI partners.

4. **Message identification determines the purpose**
   The receiver can detect the purpose (VGM update) from the message identification VERMAS. He does not have to go into the message to detect the function.
new Edifact Message
VERMAS – Verification of Mass

VERMAS in the Process Chain

Shipper → Carrier → Terminal → Vessel Master

IFTMBF, IFTMIN or VERMAS
IFTSTA or VERMAS
COPARN, COPRAR or VERMAS
CODECO or VERMAS
Only BAPLIE

VERMAS
VERMAS

Weighing station
new Edifact Message
VERMAS – Verification of Mass

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The VERMAS structure follows the KISS principle:
*Keep it short and simple*

The VERMAS is made for a dedicated purpose and contains only data elements that are clearly needed, based on the best assessment of the business requirements Resulting from the IMO guidelines (as per Q1.2016).

Additional requirements on the VERMAS content could well arise after some time of real-life usage. The main reason is expected to be country-specific legal reporting requirements.

**SMDG members: Are you aware of new reporting requirements?**
VERMAS new requirements

VERMAS to be used as a weighing order
This request was rejected. It would make the message structure too complicated. It could entail more and more data elements related to the ordering process, payment details etc.

New qualifier to describe the sequence of a container within a booking
This request will be approved. The qualifier SQ will be added to the RFF under the EQD segment in the next MIG version.

Additional data for country specific requirements.
There might be additional requests for example from China, Malaysia, India due to legal requirement. However there is no clear advice yet on the exact data to be transmitted.
**SMDG Activities**
The structure of following messages was enhanced by the SMDG in order to enable VGM reporting. New versions were published on [www.smdg.org](http://www.smdg.org)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Sender-Receiver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAPLIE</td>
<td>Enhanced</td>
<td>Stowage Plan</td>
<td>Carrier &lt;&gt; Terminal &gt; Vessel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOVINS</td>
<td>No change</td>
<td>Move Instructions</td>
<td>Carrier &gt; Terminal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPARN</td>
<td>Enhanced</td>
<td>Pre-arrival notice</td>
<td>Carrier &gt; Terminal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPRAR</td>
<td>Enhanced</td>
<td>Load List</td>
<td>Carrier &gt; Terminal Carrier &lt;&gt; Carrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CODECO</td>
<td>Enhanced</td>
<td>Gate-In confirmation</td>
<td>Terminal &gt; Carrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COARRI</td>
<td>Enhanced</td>
<td>Load/Discharge</td>
<td>Terminal &gt; Carrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERMAS</td>
<td>New development</td>
<td>VGM Reporting</td>
<td>Between various parties in the transport chain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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VERMAS working group in the SMDG

- Michael Schröder  Hapag-Lloyd (chair)
- Jost Müller  Müller&Blanck Software
- Paul Wauters  PSA Antwerp
- Stefano Ottonello  MSC Le Navi
- Yoshi Kito  EDI Expert