

New container weight regulations have safety in mind

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DURBAN - Shipping companies will in future have to adhere to strict international weight verification regulations for containers in an effort to prevent accidents.



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As of 1 July, cargo container forwarders will be subjected to stringent gross mass verification, which will be administered by the South African Maritime Safety Authority (Samsa), after noncompliance by some shippers.

The industry was notified of the requirement in June last year. Samsa said those who flouted the regulation would be liable for fines and face criminal conviction, which comes with imprisonment.

"Samsa has no resources to authorise or approve every ship in the country. We have opted to delegate some of our authority to a third party who would then act on our behalf to authorise shippers," said Kirsty Goodwin, an occupational health and safety executive at the authority.

Samsa has appointed General Marine Surveyors to oversee the verification process.

Goodwin told export industry members that there would be no extension on the regulation.

Shipping experts met in Durban on Tuesday to air concerns arising from the requirement, which is in line with International Maritime Organisation regulations.

The industry has been riddled with container weight misdeclarations that resulted in vessels tipping and getting damaged, posing a threat to lives.

Zeph Ndlovu, president of the Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Transnet GM of operations in KwaZulu-Natal, said SA's contribution to saving lives at sea was important.

SA is a member nation and signatory to the Maritime International Organisation.

Ndlovu said there had been a number of accidents on international waters. "We want to lend a hand in making sure that the global trade ... is beyond reproach as far as safety is concerned.

"We had to have this discussion and make sure that members are sensitised about readiness before the actual implementation date of 1 July 2016," said Ndlovu.

The regulation will apply to all export containers and cargo manufactured in SA and destined for the export market.

Packing houses, shippers and road transporters have to comply, as do ports, which have to align their systems with the new requirements on container weight.

Ndlovu said the majority of shippers had been adhering to the weight laws, but 5%-10% in the industry were not complying.

Sash Naidoo of Durban South Cold Storage, who packs citrus for export, said the new requirement would have cost implications. In order to comply, companies had no choice but to include a weighbridge in their facilities, he said.

Source: Business Day

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