

Security stepped up at NW port

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Truck drivers arriving at the Dampier Port were surprised last month to be greeted by a boom gate and security guard.

Before July 1 they had unfettered access to the port, the highest tonnage port in Australia, with 92 million tonnes of iron ore, salt, liquefied natural gas and other cargo passing through each year.

The port has spent \$2.2 million to introduce new security measures required by the United States Government for ports with which it trades.

The Federal Government put the security requirements into legislation and has lent money to ports for their implementation.

Port security officer Roy Gillespie said there had never been a threat but the international approach to maritime security had changed dramatically since the September 11 terrorist attacks.



Safety first: Dampier Port safety and security manager Roy Gillespie with the authority's new 5m Polyline vessel, which is part of the busy port's beefed-up security regime. Picture: Megan Powell

"It is about access control and in the new legislation you have to have access control to your facilities," Mr Gillespie said.

The boom gates and guard are temporary measures soon to be replaced by security gates with swipe card access.

Other upgrades include closed-circuit television monitoring, radar at the control tower, a tracking system for vessels and two security boats to patrol the offshore ships and the exclusion zone around port facilities.

Mr Gillespie said terrorist scenarios included a pirate vessel being sunk in the dredge channel for Hamersley Iron ships.

This would cost more than \$10 million a day in lost production.

An attack on the Woodside gas plant could affect the \$25 million cargo of an LNG ship or disrupt domestic gas supplies via the Dampier to Bunbury gas pipeline.

Mr Gillespie said that another area of concern was the 92 mil-

lion tonnes of highly explosive ammonium nitrate stored at the port for use inland in mining.

"It is a big culture change for everybody," he said. "We need to make them aware of their surroundings so if they see something different we can pick it up early."

As industrial use of the Dampier Port increased, the security risk would be reassessed and tighter controls introduced, he said.

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