

# Latino Perspectives: Women in Construction

**With the Valley's booming real estate market, women are now moving away from the sidelines and jumping feet first into the construction and contracting industry**

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By Catherine Anaya

The Arizona Registrar of Contractors office reports that more than 1,600 licensed contractors in the state are women. That's only 10 percent of the industry workforce, but with a bursting industry and a shortage of contractors to meet the demand, women appear to be at an advantage.

They're in the field, and in the office with licenses for everything from general contracting to electrical, and some like Regina Ramirez hold key top level positions.

"I think women realize that it's not just a man's industry anymore," says Ramirez.

The state doesn't have specific numbers showing how many of Arizona's women contractors are Hispanic, but Ramirez, vice president of Ramirez Mechanical Systems, Inc., would like to see more.

"In a Hispanic family I think a lot of times the construction industry is viewed as something that a man does not a woman and I think that the change is welcome," says Ramirez.

Ramirez has been V.P. of the family run Phoenix business since 1998, helping to secure high-profile work like an early stage building of the storage and maintenance facility for the Valley's Metro Light Rail project. She's witnessed first hand the change and challenges women have faced in the industry.

"Initially I think it was being taken seriously by the men that work in the industry. I think a lot of that mentality is changing. But initially it's intimidating when you're the only woman in a room full of men," she says.

To increase the presence of women in construction the ROC launched a series of free workshops.

"We want to recognize that we want to make it easier and inform a lot of our women of how to come in and get a license," explains Israel Torres, director of the Arizona Registrar of Contractors.

"I think that we have a lot to offer in this field - most of us are very good at multitasking and organizational skills are usually really good - I hate to see us being minority," says construction worker Mary Patterson.

Two more ROC women in construction workshops will be held in January. For information on the story pick up the January issue of Latino Perspectives Magazine or go to [www.azroc.gov](http://www.azroc.gov).

Source: KPHO **CBS 5 NEWS**