



## IMPERIAL COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
August 18, 2022

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### **Belen Leon-Lopez Appointed as Air Pollution Control Officer, First Woman & Latina APCO in County History**

EL CENTRO, CA – On Tuesday, August 16, the Imperial County Board of Supervisors unanimously appointed Belen Leon-Lopez to lead the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) as the Air Pollution Control Officer (APCO) effective immediately. With this permanent appointment, she becomes the first woman and Latina APCO in the history of the Air District and County of Imperial. Leon-Lopez had been serving as the interim APCO since Matt Dessert's retirement earlier this month.

During Leon-Lopez's 15-year career with the APCD, she has served in many different roles that have allowed her to become an expert in many aspects of the district's operations and functions. Beginning as an APC Specialist, she would later occupy the following positions: Environmental Coordinator, Administrative Analyst II, Project Manager, and Assistant APCO. Programs she has worked on include the U.S.-Mexico Border Environmental Program: Border 2025, AB 617 Community Air Protection Program, FARMER Program to help our local agriculture industry reduce emissions, Targeted Air Shed Grants Program to reduce air pollution in highly polluted areas, and the Lawn Equipment Exchange Program. She is currently the co-chair of the Imperial-Mexicali Air Quality Task Force.

Upon her appointment, Leon-Lopez stated, "I am humbled and excited by this opportunity, and it is an honor to serve the County alongside such an amazing Staff at the APCD. My goal is to continue to advance science based rules and policies that have resulted in cleaner air, and build on those accomplishments to continue advancing the improvement of air quality to protect our residents of Imperial County. We have a lot of work in front of us, and I am ready for this new challenge."

"The Board of Supervisors is pleased and excited of this historic appointment of Mrs. Leon-Lopez as the first Latina APCO in our history. She has exemplified dedication and commitment to improving our local air quality throughout her 15 years with our local Air District," stated Chairman of the Board, Jesus Eduardo Escobar. "She has a long history working with government agencies, businesses, and individuals across our border region to address and mitigate the air quality issues that impact our residents and travelers."

Leon-Lopez is a lifelong Imperial Valley resident and Central Union High School graduate. She lives in Heber with her husband and two children. She obtained her Master of Science Degree in Environmental Policy through Kaplan University and Bachelor of Business Administration through DeVry University.

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