



Zephyr-TEC

Presents

Talk the Talk

**A Primer for Speech Recognition
and Digital Dictation**

**Speech Recognition
Software**



**Gold Certified
Partner**

Digital Dictation



US Certified Partner

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Introduction

Many factors contribute to the successful implementation of speech recognition software or a digital dictation package. In fact you actually need to consider them separately before you look at putting them together. Each by themselves can produce great results and in the right situation, used together they can produce amazing results.

First, we need to define some terms. *Digital dictation* allows authors to dictate from anywhere in the world using virtually any input device (PC, PDA, digital recorder, the Internet, even their cell phones) and have their dictation automatically routed to the appropriate secretary or typist for transcription. When we talk about the specific capabilities of digital dictation we are drawing on our experience with WinScribe Digital Dictation, a premier digital dictation software package.

Speech recognition software is another form of digital dictation. It captures the spoken word, digitally, and transcribes dictation into text in a Windows application, such as Word or Outlook. When we discuss the specific capabilities of speech recognition software, we are referring to Dragon NaturallySpeaking Professional, Medical or Legal solution series software.

Combining both technologies allows your dictation to be easily captured and transcribed first by the speech recognition software, then routed to a secretary/typist for editing. Work gets done more efficiently and increases everyone's productivity.

However speech recognition isn't for everyone (for instance it does not work well for heavily accented individuals) and quite often you wind up with a combination of some people using the speech recognition to pretranscribe and others having their dictation routed to a typist for the more traditional approach to transcription. Digital dictation, which controls the routing of documents and dictation files, becomes invaluable.

We hope that our Digital Dictation Primer answers many of your questions, but we are sure that you will have new ones after reading through this primer. Please do not hesitate to contact us with these questions. Make the right decision for your organization by making the informed decision.

Renee L. Griffith
CEO/Executive Director



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8 Important Factors to Consider

There are really more than 8 important factors to consider, but these are among the most important to think about before selecting a solution:

- **Workflow** You need to understand how your current dictation and transcription moves through your office.
- **Equipment** Make sure that your existing computer equipment meets the system requirements.
- **Applications** Most solutions function best in Windows and Office (2000/XP).
- **Input Device** Digital recorders, handheld microphones, headset microphones, PDAs and telephone are all possibilities.
- **Integration** Careful planning is essential for a successful integration to minimize the impact on productivity.
- **Training** Consider how much time will be allocated for users to train and become successful with the solution.
- **Support** Maintenance and support are important to ongoing success as products upgrade and change.
- **Budget** While cost should not be the most important factor it must be taken into account.

Workflow

It is imperative that you think about workflow when considering speech recognition or digital dictation. Think about how you currently get your reports or documents completed. Do you dictate to a tape recorder, send the tape to a transcriptionist or transcription company, then have them courier those documents back to you for review and signature? Do you dictate via telephone to a transcription service and your reports are e-mailed back to you? Do you currently handwrite your notes on paper and place it directly into the file? Do you type your own documents? If so, do you have someone review your documents for spelling and grammatical errors before sending them out? How fast can you type (be honest)?

Understanding your workflow helps you to better define and understand your needs. This will ultimately lead to appropriate recommendations for software, equipment, training, maintenance and a budget.

For example, there is simply nothing faster than handwriting notes and placing them into a manila file folder. If you are thinking that speech recognition or digital dictation will make you more productive, think again. But, if you want to have legible notes immediately available after dictation, and you are willing to put the time and effort into learning how to use the software, then you may find speech recognition software a real benefit.

It takes dedication, time and money to implement and make a speech recognition or digital dictation solution work well, but once set up, it should increase your productivity and the legibility of your notes and reports. At first it may seem slower, and it may well be as everyone gets used to a new way of computing and doing business.

If you are already participating "in the computer age" and have good computer equipment, software and some experience with the computer, speech recognition and digital dictation

can bring great benefit to you and your organization. Whether you dictate and self edit or defer correction, speech recognition can improve productivity within the workflow. With networking, document management and Internet based dictation and transcription, a digital dictation solution brings tremendous control and tracking capabilities to your dictation/transcription workflow.

Different people in your organization may prefer different methods of dictation and transcription. Younger professionals, having grown up with computers their entire lives, tend to do very well with direct dictation to a PC with either speech recognition or digital dictation software. Older professionals, those who may not have as much computer experience, may prefer more traditional methods such as dictating to a handheld recording device and then having the file transcribed by a transcriptionist or office staff member.

Equipment

Computers

For optimum performance of today's speech recognition packages, a **Pentium 4/2 GHz** computer should be considered the minimum. Additionally, a minimum of **512 MB RAM** is necessary because today's applications are extremely RAM intensive. Speech recognition requires a **SoundBlaster 16 (or compatible)** or higher sound card, but it is recommended that you use a PCI sound card. A USB pod can be used to bypass onboard sound chips if installation of a sound card is not feasible. The computer must have **Internet Explorer 5.0** or higher in order to access Help files.

For digital dictation, the system requirements for the dictation and the transcription stations are significantly lower (P3 or higher, 128MB RAM) than those required for speech recognition software. However, digital dictation will involve a server. Digital dictation software can often be loaded on an existing server, provided there is space and resources available. If not, a server will be required (Pentium 4 or higher, 1 GB of RAM or more, plenty of storage space) to accommodate the voice files generated in a digital dictation system.

Applications

Operating systems

Speech recognition operates best with Windows 2000 or XP. Digital dictation software can be installed on Windows 98 (client only) workstations as well as any version of Windows (2000, XP) but requires a server with Windows NT, Windows 2000 Professional, Windows 2000 or 2003 Server.

Office applications

Speech recognition is designed to work best with Microsoft Office 2000 or XP applications such as Word, Outlook and Excel.

You may utilize custom software in your organization such as electronic medical record software, case law management or contact management software. Speech recognition can have extremely limited capabilities in non-Microsoft or non-Windows applications. Only someone experienced in the integration of speech recognition software can tell you whether or not it will work with your application(s). Quite often some programming must be done in order to make speech recognition more "friendly" with your custom application.

Digital dictation works with Microsoft Word or WordPerfect and can take advantage of using templates to streamline typing, as well as the ability to pull demographics from an Access or SQL database and pre-populate fields in your document. This is another way to save time and increase productivity.

Input Devices:

Microphones

For best results, a very good microphone is crucial to both digital dictation and particularly for speech recognition software. Professional Solution speech recognition software ships with a premium headset microphone. Many people don't like wearing a headset. Handheld microphones are available as an option. We recommend the Philips Speech Mike since it works well with both types of software. Along with a built in microphone, there is a track ball for moving the mouse as well as four buttons to control mouse clicks. Custom actions can also be assigned to these buttons to automate tasks on the computer. This is very popular with doctors and lawyers. It may not be a good option for those who have severe limitations of the use of their hands.

A microphone with a mute switch built into the wire can be extremely useful in an environment where interruptions are common. Normally, the speech microphone is controlled either by verbal command ("stop listening", "listen to me") or by pressing keys on the keyboard. The mute switch allows an individual to quickly "mute" the microphone by flicking a switch built into the wire leading from the headset, preventing the speech software from hearing anything, even though the mic is still "live."

For those individuals who have to work "wire free" due to mobility requirements, wireless headset microphones are available. They are expensive compared to traditional headset microphones, but well worth the money if you need to move around in your job. Wireless mics have been used in Pathology labs, allowing the pathologist to work on tissue samples with both hands while dictating a narrative directly to the computer without being attached to the computer by a wire. The downside is the batteries must be replaced or recharged frequently (5-10 hours of use) to maintain good recognition. Also, these types of microphones operate at 900 MHz and may be interfered with by other 900 MHz devices, such as cordless phones.

There are also numerous desktop microphones that sit on your desk (rather than on your head), as well as array microphones which allow you to dictate from up to 3 feet away and have no wires or headset. Array mics can only be used in "closed door" office settings since they can hear a wide range of background noise and that can affect the accuracy of speech recognition and the clarity for transcription. Array mics are more suited to digital dictation, but again background noise should be taken into consideration.

Digital Handheld Recorders

There are many digital handhelds available on the market including Olympus, Philips, Panasonic, Sony and Grundig to name just a few. The best results for speech recognition are yielded from the Olympus DS4000. The digital output from the handheld (usually a .DSS file) must be able to be converted to a .wav file of at least 11,500KHz sampling rate otherwise speech recognition will not be able to accurately transcribe the dictation. The Olympus has software to automatically make this conversion.

It is also the best choice for digital dictation due to its many features that allow multiple authors/dictators and up to 10 work types for better routing control. It is easy to use and allows up to 2 hours, 24 minutes of dictation with the standard 16MB removable media.

No matter which Digital handheld you may choose, it is always a good idea to purchase a microphone with which to dictate. Good microphones help eliminate background noise and provide clear recordings for both speech recognition software and the human ear. You can get a "lollipop" microphone (a microphone on the end of a jack, very small) that plugs directly into the digital handheld or you can use your headset microphone.

PDA's

So far, success is somewhat limited for these types of devices and speech recognition however, they are acceptable for digital dictation. These devices rarely have Microphone In jacks for hooking up an external mic for good, clear recording. We do not recommend the use of PDA's with speech recognition at this time, even though the manufacturers indicate otherwise. PDA's are fine for use with digital dictation.

Tablet PCs

Tablet PCs have come a long way over the last several years and are just now suitable for use with both speech recognition and the digital dictation software. Certainly the advantage of the tablet PC is light weight mobility. Zephyr-TEC recommends the Motion Computing line of tablet PCs including the 8.1 inch LS800 weighing just 2.2 pounds and the 12.1 inch LE 1600 weighing just 4.4 pounds with an extended battery. These tablet PCs allow the author to not only dictate but to also use handwriting recognition. With handwriting recognition, you can handwrite your notes and have those notes transcribed into text or leave them as handwriting. Combining speech recognition with handwriting recognition allows for wireless computing on a small mobile device for portability.

Telephone/cell phone

These devices can be used for digital dictation and traditional transcription but NOT for desktop speech recognition software. However, with the new Dragon NaturallySpeaking server-side speech recognition product combined with WinScribe digital dictation software, telephone dictation is now possible with speech recognition. If telephone dictation is the preferred method of voice capture, then you will have to have a PBX server, analog lines and dialogic telephone port cards in addition to a server for WinScribe. Dialogic cards can add significant cost to a deployment. We strongly recommend you consider digital dictation via the Internet or LAN as an alternative to telephone dictation.

Integration

Equipment and Software

It is vital to assess the current computer equipment used to determine if an upgrade or replacement of the system is necessary. In addition, it is extremely important to identify the type of operating system utilized (Windows 9X, 2000, XP, NT, network, mainframe or Unix). It must be determined if standard Windows software packages are used or whether custom software packages are used. Custom software packages will require integration, using macros and scripts.

Environment

Speech recognition software today is extremely robust in its ability to filter out background noise. Offices and cubicles are ideal environments for speech recognition software. Surrounding materials in the area, such as glass (large windows) or concrete walls also make a difference in performance of speech recognition software. Sound "bounces" off these kinds of materials and creates an echo to the microphone. Some adjustments to the environment may be required. All these factors can be addressed in an evaluation.

We offer free phone evaluations upon completion of a Zephyr-TEC Evaluation Form. We address all the above issues and can determine whether or not an on-site Speech Feasibility Study is required. A Speech Feasibility Study includes installation of the software in the working environment and testing with existing applications to determine which software package will integrate best with custom or mainframe environments.

For digital dictation packages, environment is much less important unless combined with speech recognition software. As long as you can clearly hear yourself on playback, the transcriptionist should also be able to hear and understand you.

Integration of Existing Workflow

Just knowing how to use the speech recognition software is half the battle. Knowing how to integrate speech recognition with existing applications is the other half. After successful completion of the introductory speech recognition training, many professionals need help with integration into existing applications and templates. An average of eight to twelve hours of on-site integration will usually complete a program. If others will be performing the same job or tasks using speech recognition, many macros and scripts that are written can be exchanged with other individuals through a simple import/export process. This reduces the integration costs for subsequent individuals.

The experienced speech recognition instructor can assist with the creation of shortcuts, macros and scripts that will help you become productive quickly and suffer less frustration.

With digital dictation, it is essential to look carefully at how to integrate it into your existing workflow. It may require integration of barcode readers, PACS systems, medical records software, patient databases and so forth depending on how complete a system you want to have in place.

Proper training and technical support are required and a reasonable amount of time needs to be planned so that everyone has a realistic understanding of what it will take to become productive and with the speech recognition or digital dictation software and computer.

Training and What It Takes

First let's address speech recognition software. For those who have little or no computer experience, it is difficult to learn how to work with a computer using speech recognition without a great deal of frustration. It will take tremendous motivation to become successful with speech recognition software. It will also take more training hours because the end user must have some basic understanding of Windows, Word (or WordPad) and the application with which they want to work.

Even the experienced computer user, familiar and comfortable operating a PC in the Windows environment, should take a minimum of eight hours of speech recognition training and then some additional training/integration to take complete advantage of the advanced features of the professional editions. This type of training teaches the quick development of voice macros (dictation shortcuts or "normals") to be used to increase your productivity. In fact, it's really more than "training" because the experienced speech recognition instructor will work with you to get speech working in your workflow as quickly as possible.

If the transcriptionist is going to be correcting the speech recognition text output, they will need a couple of hours of training to learn how to properly correct the mistakes made by the speech recognition software.

With digital dictation, there is generally very little training for those who dictate (authors) since the interfaces are simple and mimic a tape recorder. In order to go over most of the features available to an author, it takes about one hour. The typist may require anywhere from 1-3 hours to learn the in's and out's and to program the transcription features to the individuals needs. It is the System Manager that will require the most amount of training and that usually takes about a day, depending on the complexity of the system.

Technical Support and Maintenance

Technical support and maintenance (upgrades, updates) are two very important components of an ongoing successful implementation of either speech recognition or digital dictation. Technical support is important for the obvious reason that when you have a problem you have someone to call.

With speech recognition, technical support is often used more for assistance with features rather than of a "technical" nature. Speech recognition software has become extremely stable, especially on the more recent operating systems (like Windows XP) and if the implementation was done correctly, technical support should be minimal. It is still vital to have a technical support contract in place to keep things working smoothly.

Digital dictation technical support depends entirely on the system that you purchased. Some systems are more "maintenance free" meaning they are more stable, than others. If you're digital dictation system is a really good system, technical support will be invaluable for those rare moments when something does go wrong.

Software maintenance usually refers to the ability to purchase a software assurance or upgrade assurance policy that guarantees you will always receive the latest update or upgrade at no charge over a certain period of time.

With speech recognition software, you may be able to purchase a one-year upgrade assurance contract if you are purchasing in volume (at least 4 licenses).

With digital dictation software, it is **vital** that you purchase software assurance so that your system will have the latest patches, updates, etc. to keep it online and running smooth.

Usually upgrade assurance is available in 1, 2 or 3-year increments and technical support is normally sold as an annual contract.

Budget Considerations

Everyone always wants to know "How much will this cost?" We ask "How big is the problem you are trying to solve?" The bigger the problem, the more likely you are to spend money to fix the problem. The real question is "How much can you afford to budget for the project?" And, of course, the size of the budget depends on what solution you choose to implement. You have to allow for the following when developing a budget:

Which system is right for you?

Decide which type of solution you want to implement whether it's speech recognition, digital dictation or a combination of both. You might want to start with one, and then add the other.

Unfortunately you cannot really decide which system is right for you until you have investigated your options. There really isn't an "off-the-shelf" price when it comes to digital dictation in particular. If you're just considering speech recognition software, the choice is much easier since there are only two viable players in the commercial marketplace, Dragon NaturallySpeaking and IBM ViaVoice (both now ScanSoft products).

Licensing

Speech recognition software is licensed by the user (profile). Each person who wants to dictate with speech recognition must purchase a license. Licenses can run from about \$600-\$1000 depending on the version of the speech recognition software. Editors do not need to purchase a license if transcribing/correcting someone's profile.

Digital dictation can be licensed in any number of ways. Some manufacturers charge by the Author, Typist, Manager, reporting module, billing module, integration module, etc. Others license their software by the concurrent Typist and may offer licenses for Authors, Managers and report modules at no charge. Make sure that when you compare proposals from digital dictation companies that you are, in fact, comparing apples to apples. Watch carefully for hidden charges for modules, updates and so forth.

Hardware

If you are considering speech recognition software then you must look at your equipment and determine whether a budget needs to be created to upgrade or purchase new computer(s) systems. With digital dictation systems, you must make allowances for a server (hardware) as well as peripheral devices such as foot pedals and microphones.

Also under the "hardware" heading are the digital recorders, handheld microphones, headset microphones, tablet PCs and PDAs. You will most likely determine a budget for this type of hardware based on the type of digital workflow you're planning to implement.

Training

We typically tell people to budget up to about \$2500 for training of an individual in the use of speech recognition software. This training would typically be one-on-one. We offer group training at our locations or daily training rates at your facilities as well as on-site and online training options. You should allow for an ongoing training program as the speech software or your organization's software packages are upgraded.

For digital dictation we generally recommend several days of seminar type training rather than one-on-one individual training in order to keep costs down and foster a user group

within the organization. Training costs are strictly dependent on the number of people participating in the software rollout.

Tech Support and Maintenance

This can vary dramatically among speech recognition and digital dictation companies. With speech recognition software, many resellers offer hourly or multiple hour contracts valid for a year. They can range anywhere from \$300-\$600. Digital dictation technical support is normally calculated on a percentage basis of licensed items or it can be a fixed amount.

There are many ways to provide technical support (telephone, e-mail, online, on-site) and usually each type has a different cost associated with it. Technical support may be offered 5 days a week, 8 hours a day or it may be 24 hours a day, 7 days a week depending on your needs. Be prepared to pay a significant amount of money for a 24-hour, seven days a week technical support contract.

Software maintenance or upgrade assurance is imperative with the digital dictation system but not necessarily required for speech recognition software.

Specifically About Speech Recognition Software

Software Capabilities

Dragon NaturallySpeaking software can perform many functions, including continuous dictation, allowing the user to input speech directly into various applications, such as Word or WordPerfect, Excel, etc. in a continuous and natural manner. You can also command and control the Windows desktop and environment including moving between applications and documents, dropping menus, controlling applications, and creating shortcuts.

What It Can Do

Navigation is moving through your document to allow editing or formatting. Natural language commands allow you to say "go to the fifth paragraph" instead of driving the cursor to the fifth paragraph using "arrow" navigation commands.

Editing is one of the most productive uses of speech recognition software. Editing commands are used to select text, paragraphs, or pages and cut, copy or paste within the same document, different documents, or even different applications.

Formatting is greatly enhanced with speech recognition. The ability to simply say "justify the paragraph" or "underline the next two lines" is considerably faster than using a mouse to select text and then execute mouse or keystrokes to perform the formatting. Again, with natural language commands, editing and formatting are frequently combined with continuous natural commands such as "make the next five words red".

Macros and scripts can be developed to voice enable virtually any Windows application and allow hands free use, but it takes time to develop them. With proper training and perseverance, anyone can learn to write macros and scripts that will assist them in their day-to-day operation of computer.

"Mobility" products allow a user to dictate into a digital recording device. The user can then download the speech file from the digital recorder to the speech recognition software--and the words are transformed into a document, unattended. Another individual can then review the document for accuracy make changes and finalize the document. This basically transforms a transcriptionist into a correctionist.

Speed, Accuracy and Vocabulary

Recognition rates range from up to 98%. The speed of dictation varies according to the type of hardware used and the experience level of the individual. Continuous speech users are enjoying 120 words per minute or more, with 95% or higher accuracy.

An active word vocabulary is one that resides in RAM (random access memory). The total vocabulary refers to the entire available dictionary on your hard disk. These can run up to 300,000 words, with add-on vocabularies (specialty vocabularies such as neonatology or bankruptcy law) and foreign languages available to help accommodate specialized industries and international uses.

NaturallySpeaking also includes special utilities and tools to help build custom vocabularies for industry specific needs. The continuous software "reviews" various documents that you instruct it to process, and produces a word list which you then edit to remove unwanted words or terminology. You will then train any words for which the speech software doesn't have a language model. Your accuracy should be extremely high when you finish enrollment and vocabulary building.

Motivation and Patience

Remember it takes tremendous motivation and patience to be successful with speech recognition software. Injured individuals may take between 30 to 50 hours of working with the software to establish a good voice profile and create the necessary macros to reach productivity. It also takes the software time to formulate how an individual speaks. This is the most frustrating part. Constant attention and stringent correction are required to get excellent recognition accuracy and speed. If the individual doesn't invest this preliminary time, he/she may be frustrated by a low accuracy rate. Even for people who are not injured, the initial investment of time will be somewhere around 12 hours to establish a comprehensive vocabulary and high accuracy.

Choosing a Partner for Speech

By working with a company that is certified and experienced, you greatly improve the chance of success with speech recognition in your organization.

What to Look For

A ScanSoft Dragon NaturallySpeaking VAR (value added reseller) is officially referred to as a Certified Partner or Gold Certified Partner. Gold Certified Partners are certified in enterprise installations. Only a Certified Partner is authorized to sell the Professional Solutions (NaturallySpeaking Professional, Medical and Legal). ScanSoft requires Certified Partners to attend training classes and receive certifications in Dragon NaturallySpeaking. Further, trainers of Certified Partners can obtain a certification (ScanSoft Certified Dragon Instructor or SCDI) from ScanSoft which involves a rigorous training program, requires a state certification or Certified Technical Trainer certification and is not easy to earn. Many people feel that once they use Dragon NaturallySpeaking they can train it, but it is all the

behind-the-scenes integration and programming that makes Dragon a star in productivity. A Dragon Authorized Training Center (DATC) must be owned by a Certified Partner and must accommodate at least multiple students with adequate equipment and training facilities. Finally, not related to ScanSoft or Dragon NaturallySpeaking, some Certified Partners are California BPPVE (Bureau for Private Postsecondary Vocational Education) approved school with certified microcomputer application instructors.

Some questions to ask of any vendor when considering NaturallySpeaking:

Are you a Gold Certified Partner for ScanSoft?

Do you employ ScanSoft Certified Dragon Instructors?

Do you offer free demonstrations and evaluations?

What kind of training protocols do you offer? Can you provide on-site, online (live) or training at your own facility?

Do you train one-on-one? In a group?

For the group training, do you carry a Dragon Authorized Training Center certification?

How long have you been selling, installing, training and supporting Dragon NaturallySpeaking?

How do you handle technical support? On-site, remotely, e-mail, telephone?

What state certifications for training speech recognition and microcomputer applications do you have?

Can you provide referrals to customers you have worked with? Specific to my needs (medical, legal, public safety, etc.)?

What training materials do you provide?

Are they proprietary materials?

Are they specific to Dragon NaturallySpeaking Professional solutions?

Do you include any custom macros sets to increase productivity? For NaturallySpeaking? For Word? For Outlook? For Excel? For PowerPoint?

How many people are on your staff?

How many can train Dragon?

How many can support Dragon?

How many know and understand Visual Basic programming within Dragon?

Can you voice enable Microsoft templates?

Do you know how to use the advanced features of NaturallySpeaking (Voc Builder, NSAdmin, MSI installer) that are included in the NaturallySpeaking Programs folder (not meant for use by an end-user but for an ASP)?

Why Zephyr-TEC?

Since 1993, Zephyr-TEC has been selling, installing, training and supporting speech recognition software. We have developed our own Learning Guides and custom macros sets for NaturallySpeaking and Microsoft Office. Our *Fastrack Learning Guide for NaturallySpeaking* as well as our other Learning Guides (including our custom macro sets) is copyrighted and proprietary materials. Our NaturallySpeaking macros add tremendous functionality to NaturallySpeaking itself. Our Word, Outlook, Excel and PowerPoint macros make using those applications even more productive by voice. Many Partners have written some macros, but they are nowhere near as comprehensive as the ones created by Zephyr-TEC.

Zephyr-TEC won numerous ScanSoft Partnering for Excellence awards. This award is issued by ScanSoft to 5 Gold Certified Partners in the country (by region) for outstanding sales and service of Dragon NaturallySpeaking Professional Solutions. We work directly with ScanSoft developers and application engineers and have been invited to participate in every beta test of every release of Dragon NaturallySpeaking since version 1.0 in April of 1997.

We have thousands of clients all over the country. Our client base includes installations at Chevron Texaco (close to 800 users), Boeing (close to 150 users), Intel, Hewlett-Packard, Levi Strauss, Southern California Edison, Pacific Gas and Electric and the list goes on. Our expertise allows us to provide the best training, implementation and support for speech recognition anywhere.

We have offices in San Mateo (San Francisco Bay Area) and Rancho Cucamonga (Southern California), Seattle, WA and Las Vegas, NV as well as trainers Arizona and Alaska.

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Contact Us

Zephyr-TEC Corp. (So. CA)
9631 Business Center Drive, Suite B
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730

Toll-free: 877-493-7497
or 909-481-9991
Fax: 909-481-9959

Zephyr-TEC Corp. (No. CA)
1660 S. Amphlett Blvd.
Suite #116
San Mateo, CA 94402

Toll-free: 800-822-1816
or 650-655-2405
Fax: 650-655-2406

Zephyr-TEC Corp. (Pacific Northwest)
13 751 Lake City Way NE
Suite #201
Seattle, WA 98125

Toll-free: 888-540-5999
or 206-523-3586
Fax: 206-523-3587

Zephyr-TEC Corp. (Arizona)
30 Sandrock Road
Sedona, AZ 86351

Toll-free: 877-493-7497
or 928-284-5382
Fax: 928-284-4364

Zephyr-TEC Corp. (Nevada)
7501 Cedargulf Avenue
Las Vegas, NV 89131

Toll-free: 877-493-7497
or 702-413-6734
Fax: 702-413-7185

Email: info@zephyr-tec.com

Web: www.zephyr-tec.com