Triangle Communications is a "people-focused" ISP serving residents in rural Montana. Under the Triangle Telephone Cooperative (TTC and its subsidiaries), they are a company owned by its members for close to 70 years. They provide telecommunications services, including Broadband Internet and local and long-distance telephone to their 17,000+ subscribers.

Internet access, and the freedom to connect, can be seen as a right, but high infrastructure costs and other barriers to entry, have caused an ISP monopolization, leaving fewer options for customers. In recent years, we've seen local communities build out their own last mile. Though for nearly 70 years now, Triangle Communications has carved out their own path providing telecommunications services, including Broadband Internet and local and long-distance telephone to the rural residents of Central Montana.

"We originally formed in the 1950s by people in the area that wanted telephone services and couldn't get it any other way other than to come together as a group of people and invest in a cooperative," Director of I.T. for Triangle Communications Chris Durward said. "And obviously, as time has changed quite a bit from the ‘50s, we've shifted more from strictly a telephone and long-distance company to mainly an ISP."

Triangle Telephone Cooperative is a company owned by its members—who Chris says is another word for their customers—and according to their website, in 1994, Triangle Telephone Cooperative purchased 13 exchanges from U.S. West (now CenturyLink) and formed a subsidiary named Central Montana Communication. In 2016, these exchanges were brought into a cooperative. Triangle Communications is the name, and its subsidiaries have chosen to do business all since 2008.

Chris explained that besides providing services like Broadband Internet, they also offer some business solutions like managed networks, wireless systems, and point-to-point.

"It's very rural, so we try to cater to that," Chris said of their 17,000+ subscribers who live in 16 counties from the Canadian to Wyoming border. "We have a lot of people that live on farms and ranches that want to connect up multiple buildings like shops and barns. We provide some point-to-point wireless solutions for that. So really, we focus on what our members need. We do some things that maybe other ISPs don't, and we try our best to find solutions for our members."
What has been crucial for Triangle Communications is using Universal Service Funds to help their members build the network. Universal Service Funds, which the federal government provides, gives Triangle Communications the ability to deliver internet services to their rural members at a reasonable cost.

"We still try to provide fair prices to our membership," he said. "You know, it's kind of cool. I like working for a cooperative. We serve our members rather than serving shareholders. Our members, they are our shareholders, really."

**NO ONE STOPS THREATS LIKE DNSFILTER**

A few years back, Chris said they were looking for an extra layer of security to protect their internet reliability and to keep malware and phishing schemes off their network. Chris stated he wanted to keep people off malicious websites and, through word of mouth, was introduced to DNSFilter. "DNSFilter seemed pretty popular based on what I was hearing from other people," he said.

DNSFilter Roaming Clients came in at the right time during the COVID-19 pandemic and stood out because Triangle Communications had more employees working remotely.

"We have a huge service area, so we have employees that are constantly out in the field, sometimes working from remote locations or hotels," he said. "So having something that could protect them when they're on our network and also when they're on other unknown networks was important to me," Chris said. "Choosing DNSFilter has been one of the best things I've done since starting at Triangle."

To close any cybersecurity gaps, Chris has many layers in his security stack. DNSFilter has helped save Triangle Communications from potential compromises. Occasionally that an employee will click on a phishing email, which took the employee to a Credential Harvesting site.

"The employee got blocked by DNSFilter, and nothing else stopped them," he said. I can't tell you how that has saved us," he added, "but DNSFilter has easily paid for itself over and over again.

He continued: "So possibly cybersecurity insurance premiums go up if it's ransomware. If we hadn't dodged that, it could be huge dollar-wise. If DNSFilter stops us from one compromise, to me, that's totally worth it. The amount of money we pay for it compared to one compromise... it's not even close. We're talking tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of dollars in a compromise versus what we pay for DNSFilter, it's pennies in comparison."

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CHRIS DURWARD

Director of I.T.
Thanks to machine learning, DNSFilter has the ability to categorize billions of domains daily. Chris said they saw “quite a bit of help” blocking under the threat category “New Domains.” New domains registered in the last 30 days are highly likely to serve malicious resources.

**ALREADY AHEAD OF THE GAME**

We can see in the culture and cybersecurity industry the importance of DNS Security and why it’s essential. Chris took pride in knowing they had already been ahead of the game by relying on DNSFilter to protect their network and their business.

“I was actually at a conference last week in D.C., and they were talking about some of the new cybersecurity insurance requirements, and I did see they added in questions like ‘do you provide DNS filtering on your network?’ So I was like, ‘check that off, we got that done,’” he said.

Chris’s satisfaction was only matched by his elation when recommending DNSFilter.

“Every business and every home should have some kind of DNS filtering like DNSFilter because it’s so easy to implement, and the results are immediate.”