WASHINGTON -- In commemoration of Juneteenth National Independence Day, FEMA staff will participate in employee-hosted programming honoring the legacy of Juneteenth, followed by a day of public service on Monday, June 20, led by members of the FEMA National Service Alumni Employee Resource Group at Washington, D.C., non-profit Bread for the City.

“It is incredibly important that we come together as a nation to recognize the significance of Juneteenth, and to never forget the millions of Black Americans who were deprived of their freedoms in this country under slavery,” said FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell. “At FEMA, we strive to place equity at the center of our efforts and do our part in addressing and correcting these historical injustices.”

Juneteenth, also known as Emancipation Day or Black Independence Day, commemorates the day in 1865 when the last enslaved African Americans in Galveston, Texas, were informed of General Order 3, declaring that all slaves were free. Last year, in support of this important day, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. signed the “Juneteenth National Independence Day Act” into law, officially commemorating Juneteenth as a federal holiday.

“Juneteenth not only serves as a celebration of the hope, resilience and perseverance of the African-American community, but it also allows us all to reflect on our country’s complex history -- examining both the legacy of systemic racism while also appreciating how far we have come,” said FEMA Deputy Administrator Erik A. Hooks. “At FEMA, and across the Biden-Harris Administration, we know even more work must be done if we are to live up to the promise of Juneteenth and ensure everyone in this country lives a life of dignity.” Deputy Administrator Hooks also recorded a video where he reflected further on his thoughts for the holiday.

In addition to the community service project FEMA’s National Service Alumni Employee Resource Group will do with D.C.’s non-profit Bread for the City, FEMA also recognized Juneteenth with two special employee-hosted events earlier this
One event, hosted by the agency’s Veteran’s Advisory Council, featured a presentation from Juneteenth Legacy Project President Samuel L. Collins III. A second event, co-hosted by the FEMA African American Employee Resource Group and Equity Coalition of the Willing, featured a conversation celebrating Juneteenth, acknowledging lessons from the past and connecting them to the current-day struggle for African-American freedom and equity.