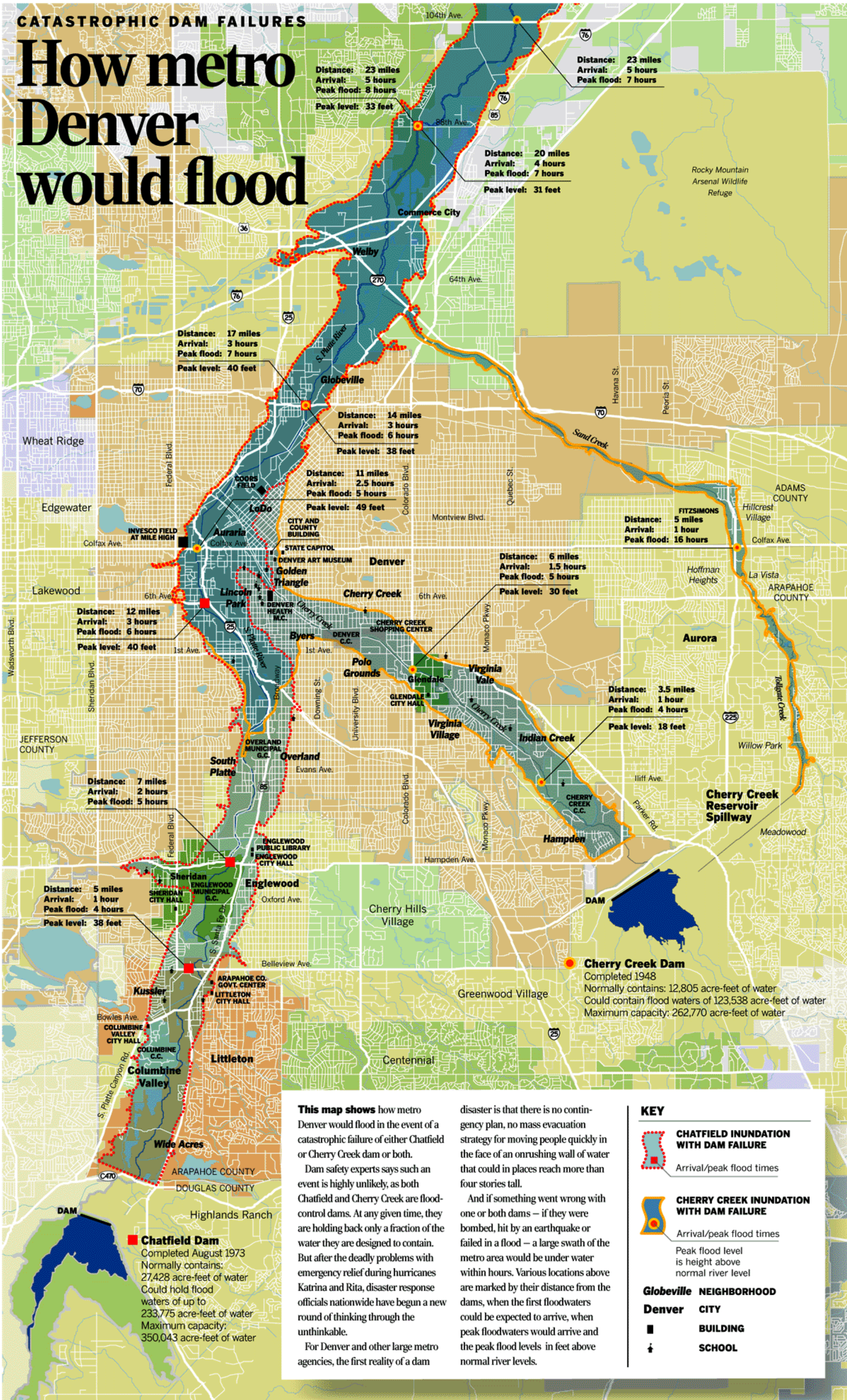


CATASTROPHIC DAM FAILURES

How metro Denver would flood



This map shows how metro Denver would flood in the event of a catastrophic failure of either Chatfield or Cherry Creek dam or both.

Dam safety experts says such an event is highly unlikely, as both Chatfield and Cherry Creek are flood-control dams. At any given time, they are holding back only a fraction of the water they are designed to contain. But after the deadly problems with emergency relief during hurricanes Katrina and Rita, disaster response officials nationwide have begun a new round of thinking through the unthinkable.

For Denver and other large metro agencies, the first reality of a dam

disaster is that there is no contingency plan, no mass evacuation strategy for moving people quickly in the face of an onrushing wall of water that could in places reach more than four stories tall.

And if something went wrong with one or both dams – if they were bombed, hit by an earthquake or failed in a flood – a large swath of the metro area would be under water within hours. Various locations above are marked by their distance from the dams, when the first floodwaters could be expected to arrive, when peak floodwaters would arrive and the peak flood levels in feet above normal river levels.