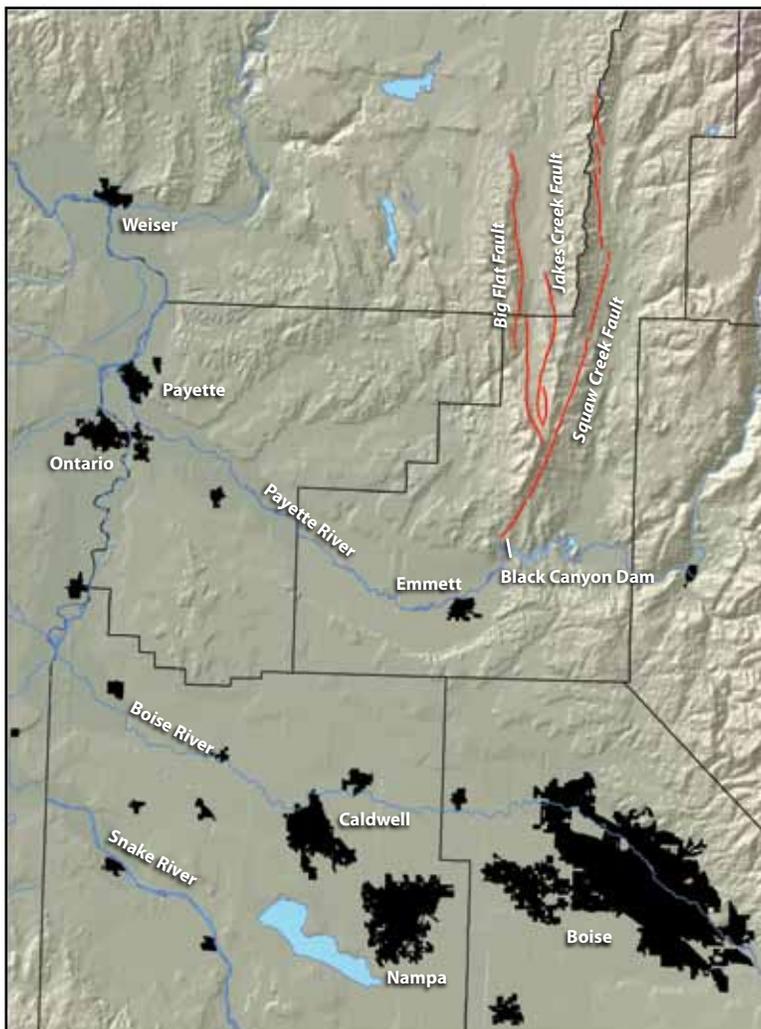


Is Boise at Risk from Earthquakes?



The tips of active faults are within 25 miles of Boise. Urban areas are shown in black (IGS image).

Boise is located at the northern margin of the Western Snake River Plain. Numerous northwest-trending faults are present but these faults do not appear active based upon geomorphic expression and the age of the sediments they cut. The Boise metro area has several features which may make it especially vulnerable to strong earthquake ground shaking. Three dams impound the Boise River above the city. Earthquake-induced damage to the dams could cause flooding in the city and downstream communities. Irrigation canals above the city could fail during an earthquake sending water into the city. During irrigation season, the water table along parts of the Boise River floodplain rises to within a few feet of the ground surface. Earthquake shaking could cause liquefaction of these sediments and damage to buildings and roads built upon them.

Boise is threatened with earthquake shaking from the north. The Squaw Creek, Big Flat, and Jakes Creek faults are active structures that extend to within 25 miles of Boise, close enough to cause significant damage to the city and surrounding urban areas in the event of a magnitude 6 or 7 earthquake. The Squaw Creek fault has geologic evidence for movement as recently as 7600 years ago. The southern tip of the Squaw Creek fault is close to the Black Canyon Dam on the Payette River. Failure or damage of this dam could cause flooding in Emmett.