

# **Alaska Science Forum**

## ***How much is a billion?***

How much is a billion dollars?

Despite inflation's upward trend which may someday require each of us to carry around sums like this for pocket money, it's hard to envision what a billion means. At the suggestion of one of our local borough assemblymen (the Geophysical Institute's Dr. Bill Stringer), we have amassed some comparative figures to help people understand how much a billion dollars is.

By actual measurement, we have determined that a hundred United States dollars laid side by side will cover an area one meter square (just over a square yard). It takes about 8200 normally worn bills to make a stack one meter high.

So:

— A stack of one billion dollar bills will reach from the ground 120 kilometers upward so that its top 20 kilometers would be immersed in a normal aurora.

— With a billion dollar bills, one could lay down a band seventy bills wide along the full length of the Alaska-Canada border from Demarcation Point to Tongass.

— With a lot of paste and a billion dollars, one could paper over the outside of the full length of the Trans-Alaska pipeline twice and still have \$140,000 left over for refreshments during coffee breaks.

— There are probably about 50,000 moose in Alaska so with a billion dollars, one could make a stack of bills beside each moose that would reach at least as high as the moose's head.

— If one sat down to count a billion dollar bills and could count them at the rate of one per second every second of every day, it would take more than thirty years to finish the task.

Now you have a clear picture of how much a billion dollars is. — Neil Davis