WINTER TRAVEL TIPS

Equipment TIPS:
- Wear “TRAX” on shoes/boots for greater traction
- Fiberglass canes are preferable (rather than aluminum) as the joints don’t freeze or expand making them easier to fold in cold weather
- Eye protection on sunny days is critical to reduce glare and help with depth perception
- Use of a round ball tip will roll easier on irregular surfaces (pencil tip and marshmallow tips often stick)

Environmental Change TIPS:
- Snow cover muffles auditory information and also blocks/changes useable landmarks making them unrecognizable
- Different types of snow require different cane techniques (e.g., heavy packed snow cover requires heavier touch technique)
- Crisp cold days accentuate auditory information and auditory cues transmit over longer distances.
- Wind can mask environmental sounds, while accentuating some obstacles (passing a building line)
- Choose routes based on clearance of sidewalk as a priority (busier streets/sidewalks will be cleared before less traveled routes)
- Ask others about sidewalk clearance before venturing out. You may need to modify travel plans.

Melting Snow Adjustment TIPS:
- Melting snow leads to puddles accumulating at curbs. Be sure to clear the curb area first to determine the size of the puddle and strategy for crossing or averting.
- Melting snow leads to SLUSH on the streets which tends to amplify traffic sounds. Spend more time analyzing or ask for assistance if unsure.
Travel Adjustment TIPS:

- Adjusting your weight slightly forward toward the balls of your feet help with balance in unpredictable situations.

- Snow banks (after a plow has passed through) can be challenging. You can probe the snow bank with your cane, scan the top of the band with the cane extended until it drops off to assess the height and width and to locate a path through if available.

- If travel necessitates crossing over a snow bank, it is often best to go sideways for greater balance and control, if orientation is good. Use the cane like a ski pole and use in front of the body to advance up, and then down the bank.

- If travel and orientation necessitate walking in a straight line up and over a snow bank, then anchor the cane to provide support for balance, AFTER clearing the area in front first to make sure there are no obstacles.

- When sidewalks are icy, walk on the shoreline beside the sidewalk.

- If there are snow banks on both sides of the sidewalk, choke down on the cane to decrease cane arc and prevent sticking.

- It is easy to lose orientation and veer when there is snow coverage on all areas of travel (streets, curbs, sidewalks, driveways, etc.). You will need to rely heavily on familiarity with the environment, your time-distance judgement and available environmental cues.