Sugar Piles at Piers As Buying Slackens

NEW YORK—Industrial and consumer resistance to buying sugar is causing a backup at piers across the country as ships carrying raw sugar aren't able to discharge their cargo to warehouses oversupplied with the commodity.

"The warehouses here are so filled that we just can't move ships in," said Benjamin Wilson, who works for Lavino Agencies, a freight-line company in Baltimore.

In New York Harbor, a ship from Brazil carrying 22,000 tons of raw sugar for Amstar, the country's largest processor of sugar, sat for three weeks before it would begin discharging on Jan. 8.

"We discharged 1,000 tons of sugar shortly after we came in on Dec. 11, but then stopped because Amstar stopped processing," said Don Cappio of Omnium, the freight agency that carries sugar for Amstar here.

Cappio, who said he couldn't recall a time when the warehouses were so backed up, said he believed there was such an abundance because "people have stopped buying sugar at the supermarket so the companies have stopped processing."

Spokesmen for some of the larger refineries in the country admit that deliveries to industrial users have slackened more than is normal for this time of year, as well as sales at the supermarket level.

The attribute the latter, however, not to a consumer boycott of sugar but to the fact that many people bought large quantities of sugar as the price began to rise last fall.

Ray Guth, a spokesman for Amstar, said he thought the reduction in sugar sales was a "temporary thing."